



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Official Report

# MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Thursday 3 September 2015

Session 4

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# Scottish Parliament

Thursday 3 September 2015

*[The Presiding Officer opened the meeting at 11:40]*

## General Question Time

### Berriedale Braes (Improvement Scheme)

**1. Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government whether a public local inquiry will be held following the publication of the draft road order material for the A9 Berriedale braes improvement scheme. (S4O-04538)

**The Minister for Transport and Islands (Derek Mackay):** Currently, one statutory objector remains. Consequently, it has been necessary for Transport Scotland to approach the directorate for planning and environmental appeals to arrange a public local inquiry. We understand that an inquiry will proceed unless the objection in question is withdrawn.

**Rhoda Grant:** The minister will be aware that, in July, Caithness Chamber of Commerce criticised the Scottish Government for dragging its heels on the issue. In light of his answer, will he commit funding to the far north rail line to ensure that people in Caithness and businesses in the far north are not disadvantaged by this further delay in road improvements?

**Derek Mackay:** I want to correct Rhoda Grant. Caithness Chamber of Commerce did not criticise the Scottish Government; it criticised politicians collectively for the length of time that it takes for reporters to consider such schemes. I agree with those who want the Berriedale braes scheme to proceed. This Government has done more to progress that scheme than any other Government. We will continue to make progress. We are committed to the scheme, but we must follow due process. The case will have to go through the process of the DPEA, which is performing better and processing cases more quickly than it was under the previous Administration.

We are committed to the Berriedale braes scheme as a priority in a massive infrastructure investment programme. We will also look at rail investment, which is at a record high under this Government. We are ensuring that we touch every part of the country. I hope that the objection to the Berriedale braes scheme, which is so necessary, can be withdrawn so that we can get on with it. If the objection is not withdrawn, we must comply with the law and the regulations and undertake the public local inquiry, after which we will proceed as

quickly as we can. Unlike Labour, which continues to make demands, this Government makes progress.

### Land Reform (Scotland) Bill (Consultation)

**2. Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what further consultation is planned with regard to the Land Reform (Scotland) Bill. (S4O-04539)

**The Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Aileen McLeod):** The Scottish Government welcomes all voices to the debate on land reform. The Scottish Government's Land Reform (Scotland) Bill, which represents an important next step in our wider programme of land reform, was introduced to this Parliament on 22 June. The Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee's call for written evidence closed on 14 August and the majority of responses are now available on the Parliament's website. This week, the committee started to take oral evidence on the bill.

We have a great opportunity to ensure that all views and ideas on the bill's proposals are explored further as the bill goes through the Parliament. Scottish ministers look forward to continuing to work closely with the committee, members, stakeholder organisations and people across Scotland on the future of land reform in Scotland.

**Bruce Crawford:** I would be grateful if the minister would meet me to discuss some specific suggestions that I have with regard to the agricultural holdings aspects of the bill, in particular the potential that exists for putting the code of conduct for land agents on a statutory footing, for enabling tenant farmers to better secure the full value of their farm when they surrender a lease, for levels of compensation to be agreed before a farmer agrees in principle to quit and for enabling tenant farmers to more fully benefit from any diversification activity that they undertake.

**Aileen McLeod:** The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Food and Environment and I will be happy to meet Mr Crawford to discuss the agricultural holdings provisions in the bill. We will also consult stakeholders on the detail of the regulations that are to be developed in connection with the bill's provisions and any other issues that it would be helpful to explore with industry experts. Some of that work has already begun—for example, the work in relation to defining the approach to productive capacity to ensure that we achieve the best results for the sector.

### **Haddington Community Hospital (Completion)**

**3. Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government whether the new Haddington community hospital will be completed by 2019. (S4O-04540)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport (Shona Robison):** I refer the member to previous answers, in particular my written answer to the member on 7 August and Mr Swinney's answer on 31 July.

As stated in those answers, the Scottish Government is considering whether further changes are required to the hub model in the light of the recent opinion by the Office for National Statistics on the Aberdeen western peripheral route, which is another project that is using funding on the non-profit distribution model. Scottish ministers remain committed to supporting the East Lothian community hospital project. NHS Lothian continues to develop its plans for a replacement hospital and those plans are progressing on schedule.

**Iain Gray:** East Lothian's new hospital was due to open in 2009. This Government switched the project to its private finance programme, which has caused a 10-year delay. Any new problems with that programme cannot be allowed to further delay the hospital. I ask again that the cabinet secretary give my constituents the firm promise that they need that the hospital will be completed by 2019.

**Shona Robison:** Of course, it was Iain Gray's Government that was the lover of private finance initiative programmes, and the health budget is now suffering the consequences of that.

The NPD model has delivered numerous new-build facilities, including schools, hospitals and other important parts of infrastructure. The Scottish Futures Trust is engaging closely with project partners to discuss the implications for them of the ONS's comments and considerations. The Deputy First Minister will provide a further report to Parliament in due course. In the meantime, all appropriate action is being taken to protect vital capital investment in Scotland, including in the new Haddington community hospital.

We will manage the implications of the latest guidance on classification for the NPD programme and the Scottish budget. This Government has invested huge amounts of resource in new hospitals and schools, and we will continue to do so.

### **Aberdeen City Region Deal**

**4. Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what discussions

it has had with Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire councils on progressing the bid for the Aberdeen city region deal. (S4O-04541)

**The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Constitution and Economy (John Swinney):** Scottish ministers are fully supportive of a city region deal for Aberdeen. There have been a number of official-level discussions with both local authorities to explore the opportunity that such a deal would offer, and we look forward to continuing constructive discussions in the coming weeks and months.

**Richard Baker:** Can the cabinet secretary assure me that, in addition to working closely with both local authorities and the United Kingdom Government to progress the bid, which will be submitted formally tomorrow, ministers will provide resources to the deal, as they did in the case of Glasgow and the Clyde valley? Further, does he agree that, given the current significant challenges for the oil and gas industry, the bid's success is crucial for the wider Scottish and UK economies?

**John Swinney:** I reassure Mr Baker that the Government attaches the greatest of importance to working constructively with Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council on the city region deal for Aberdeen. The deal will help to deal with some of the issues and challenges that prevail in the oil and gas sector. What will also help is the significant infrastructure investment that the Scottish Government is already making in the north-east of Scotland through, for example, the £745 million-worth of investment in the Aberdeen western peripheral route, the work that is under way to expand health infrastructure in the north-east and the £187 million investment in transport infrastructure. We will willingly consider the bid from Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council and will discuss it with both authorities and with the United Kingdom Government.

**Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP):** Can the cabinet secretary indicate what consultation Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council have undertaken with business and communities in the north-east to garner their thoughts on what should be in a city deal investment plan?

**John Swinney:** I am not familiar with the formulation of the bid, which is a matter entirely for the two bodies concerned. The Government will judge the issues that emerge from it.

It would be beneficial and advantageous for extensive dialogue to have been undertaken with the business community and local communities to ensure that the bid commands widespread support and that it addresses the needs and aspirations of people in the north-east of Scotland.

### **General Practitioners (Remote and Rural Areas)**

#### **5. John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Ind):**

To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to ensure availability of general practitioners in remote and rural areas. (S4O-04542)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport (Shona Robison):** Ministers are fully committed to supporting primary care, including GPs, and to ensuring that all communities in Scotland, including those that are remote and rural, receive safe, reliable and sustainable health care services.

Over the next three years, the Scottish Government will invest £60 million, as part of the primary care fund. That will help to address immediate workload and recruitment issues and will enable long-term sustainable change to support GPs and improve access to services for patients.

As part of that, £2.5 million will be invested in work with key stakeholders to explore the issues surrounding GP recruitment and retention, which can be particularly challenging in remote and rural areas.

**John Finnie:** The cabinet secretary will be familiar with the Royal College of Nursing's report, "Going the Extra Mile", which rightly advocates the role of advanced nurse practitioners. For example, advanced nurse practitioners deliver immediate care in Shetland and provide vital primary care services on non-doctor islands. Will the cabinet secretary encourage the roll-out of that model?

**Shona Robison:** John Finnie makes a very important point about the role of advanced nurse practitioners who have demonstrated their value in the acute setting and in primary care. I am very keen that we look at how we can encourage and facilitate the training of advanced nurse practitioners, which at the moment is down to the initiative of the local health board. I would like to develop more systematic training of advanced nurse practitioners because the health service will in the future, in both primary care and acute services, require more of them. I am actively considering that and would be happy to keep John Finnie informed of progress.

**Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** I thank the cabinet secretary for her support for advanced nurse practitioners. However, we now have a situation in which 18 general practices in the Highlands are being directly run by the health board. Dispensing practices, which are also largely in the Highlands, are down by 40 per cent under the SNP Government.

Will the Government institute an independent review of remote and rural practices and will it

follow the Wilson report's suggestion of an immediate moratorium on new community pharmacies until that independent review is conducted?

**Shona Robison:** Across Scotland, there are nine general practices that require to be supported by boards because of the difficulties that they are facing. Richard Simpson has conflated salaried practices with those that currently require additional support from health boards. I think that the salaried practices service for GPs is a good thing and I am surprised that the Labour Party does not agree. It is a particularly good thing for more remote and rural areas, as well as for more deprived communities. We have established that model and supported it for quite some time. It is just a pity that the Labour Party seems not to support it, too.

**John Scott (Ayr) (Con):** The cabinet secretary will be aware that there are insufficient doctors available to provide an out-of-hours service in Ayrshire and that in the future that work is to be undertaken by nurse practitioners. Is she content that that will not represent a diminution or dilution of the service that was previously provided by GPs? Has she—or have her officials—discussed that with NHS Ayrshire and Arran?

**Shona Robison:** As John Scott will be aware, Lewis Ritchie is undertaking a review of out-of-hours services and has been going around all parts of the country, including Ayrshire and Arran, to discuss with local health professionals, the public and others the needs of their areas. We await his recommendations, which should be coming soon.

It is fair to say that the future of out-of-hours sustainability will be closely aligned with the future of in-hours primary care. It is not about just the GP delivering services; rather, they must be delivered by a multi-disciplinary team of professionals including the advanced nurse practitioners to whom John Finnie referred. Those people will be fully trained, with the skill levels and ability to do the job.

When Lewis Ritchie has reported, I will be happy to come back to John Scott—and, indeed, Parliament—with more information on how we will take the recommendations forward.

### **NHS Highland (Staffing)**

**6. Rob Gibson (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what recent discussions it has had with NHS Highland regarding staff shortages and hard-to-fill posts. (S4O-04543)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport (Shona Robison):** Government officials maintain on-going contact with NHS

Highland around a number of matters, including staff recruitment and retention. I will be holding NHS Highland's annual review in Wick on 7 September, at which a wide range of issues will be discussed with the board.

**Rob Gibson:** Will the cabinet secretary ensure that, in the public interest of my constituents and many others, placements are created for trainee doctors in rural and urban Scotland, rather than doctors just being trained in one or two large urban centres? That will offer trainees insights into working in smaller and more remote centres as part of their potential career choices for future work.

**Shona Robison:** Yes. I agree with that. A number of initiatives are already in place to ensure that doctors get to experience rural as well as urban settings. NHS Education for Scotland has developed post certificate of completion of training rural fellowships for general practitioners who have completed speciality training. We are working with boards to develop networks between rural and urban hospitals, which in some areas involve the rotation of staff between rural and urban hospitals, and we are exploring, through the being here programme, a range of approaches to develop sustainable healthcare in rural areas.

I am happy to keep Rob Gibson informed of the discussions that we have at the NHS Highland review about those matters.

### Patient Costs (Hospitals)

**7. Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what the average cost is to keep a patient in hospital for one week. (S4O-04544)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport (Shona Robison):** The average cost of an in-patient week at an NHS Scotland hospital in 2013-14 was £3,817.

**Neil Findlay:** One in seven beds in Lothian hospitals is occupied by a patient who is well enough to be at home. Why is the Government wasting almost £4,000 a week each keeping people in hospital who do not want or need to be there? Would not it be better to fully finance our councils to provide good quality social care for people in their own homes?

**Shona Robison:** Far from wasting money, we are investing £100 million over the next three years in tackling delayed discharge. West Lothian will receive £11.4 million from the integrated care and delayed discharge funding over the next three years: £8.5 million from the integrated care fund and £2.85 million in relation to delayed discharge.

I have made it clear that the issue is a top priority for us to tackle. If Neil Findlay looked at the

recent statistics, he would recognise that we are making progress; there is far more to be done, but we are making progress. I would have thought that Neil Findlay might welcome that.

### Landfill Tax (Contaminated Soil)

**8. Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what rate of landfill tax will apply to the disposal of contaminated soil. (S4O-04545)

**The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Constitution and Economy (John Swinney):** Subsoils qualify at the lower rate of tax unless they are contaminated to such an extent as to render them hazardous. That recognises that a relatively low level of environmental impact is associated with landfilling subsoils. Permissible levels of contamination are decided by Revenue Scotland under powers that are granted to it in the Landfill Tax (Scotland) Act 2014. It has recently consulted on the issue and will shortly publish updated guidance.

**Malcolm Chisholm:** Does the cabinet secretary agree that it would be more environmentally friendly to encourage the remediation and recycling of contaminated soil rather than sending it all for landfill disposal? Would it not be better to impose a higher rate of landfill tax for such soil than a lower rate, which will kill off the soil-remediation industry?

**John Swinney:** Mr Chisholm has raised those issues with me in correspondence and I have looked carefully at them. There is a balance to be struck between providing opportunities for the reuse of soil as part of regeneration schemes and ensuring that there is an effective means of disposing of soils in a fashion that does not create environmental damage.

Revenue Scotland is considering that point within the consultation exercise, and its judgment and its views will form the basis of the guidance, which the board has looked at and which will be published shortly. However, I assure Mr Chisholm that the issues that he has raised with me have been at the heart of Revenue Scotland's consideration. I will, of course, be happy to answer on any further thoughts that Mr Chisholm has on behalf of his constituents once the Revenue Scotland guidance has been published.



## First Minister's Question Time

11:59

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** I expect that many members will be particularly keen to contribute to the questions that have been selected this week. To ensure that as many members as possible get the chance to do that, I would be grateful for all members' co-operation in keeping their contributions brief and to the point.

### Engagements

**1. Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab):** To ask the First Minister what engagements she has planned for the rest of the day. (S4F-02907)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** Later today, and ahead of a summit of humanitarian and civic organisations that I will host in Edinburgh tomorrow, I will write to David Cameron to again urge that the United Kingdom plays its full part in helping refugees in desperate need. I also have engagements to take forward the Government's programme for Scotland.

**Kezia Dugdale:** This week, we have seen pictures of women in the sea desperately trying to keep their babies afloat, fellow human beings left to suffocate in the backs of lorries because of evil traffickers, and refugees perilously packed on to boats unfit for the tides ahead. This morning, almost every paper in the land carried a picture of a boy who was washed on to the shore.

We have a Prime Minister who says that showing more compassion and taking in more refugees is not the answer. The First Minister has said that Scotland is ready and willing to do more than our share. Will she therefore convene an urgent meeting with Scotland's council leaders, party leaders and people in the Parliament and other relevant Government agencies so that Scotland can speak with one voice and match our compassion with the action that we are all willing to take?

**The First Minister:** I have already taken the step of convening a summit tomorrow, to which I have invited humanitarian organisations, including the Scottish Refugee Council, leaders of councils and civic organisations and, indeed, our churches. I extend an invitation to the Opposition party leaders to attend that summit, as well.

As First Minister of Scotland, I pledge that I will ensure that Scotland does everything possible to help the refugee crisis. I will be far from the only person who was reduced to tears last night at the picture of a little boy washed up on a beach. That wee boy has touched our hearts, but his is not an isolated tragedy. He and thousands like him

whose lives are at risk are not somebody else's responsibility; they are the responsibility of all of us. So yes, I am very angry at the walk-on-by-on-the-other-side approach of the UK Government. I implore David Cameron to change his position today, and I pledge as First Minister of this country that we will stand ready to help to offer sanctuary to refugees who need our help.

**Kezia Dugdale:** I assure the First Minister that the Labour Party stands with her in doing everything that we can to tackle the humanitarian crisis.

I pay tribute to all the police officers and staff across the country who spend every day keeping us safe. Tragically, this summer one emergency call was not responded to for 72 hours. John Yuill and Lamara Bell lost their lives. At the time of the launch of the inquiry, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice said that there was "no evidence" that the M9 accident had anything to do with the call centre being "overburdened" and pointed the finger at one individual. Today's interim report recommends that plans to close call centres in Dundee, Aberdeen and Inverness should be suspended. Scottish Labour called for that months ago. Can the First Minister confirm that those recommendations will be accepted?

**The First Minister:** Yes, they will be. I acknowledge that the review that is being carried out by Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary in Scotland arises from the tragic incident on the M9. We were all shocked and saddened by the circumstances surrounding the deaths of John Yuill and Lamara Bell, and all of our thoughts continue to be with their families. Police Scotland has already apologised. On behalf of the Scottish Government, I also want to say how deeply sorry I am for what those families are going through.

The review that the inspectorate is carrying out—I ask members to remember this—was, of course, instructed by the Cabinet Secretary for Justice to look specifically at the capacity and capability of control centres and the processes within them. In short, it was instructed to identify whether there are any systemic issues that we need to address. As Kezia Dugdale indicated, the interim review—I stress that it is an interim report that was published today—has one recommendation. It says that

"detailed planning for the previously agreed end-state model should continue"

but the current service centres in Dundee, Aberdeen and Inverness should not close until Govan, Motherwell and Bilston Glen are fully capable of taking additional calls from the north and the new area control centre in Dundee is fully operational. We accept that recommendation unreservedly and the justice secretary will outline

this afternoon how we will support Police Scotland to fully implement it.

**Kezia Dugdale:** That is indeed welcome news and I thank the First Minister for it. However, today's report also seeks assurances on workforce planning. The First Minister sits in her seat today because of populist policies such as 1,000 extra police officers, but we know that civilian staff have paid the price for that policy. The latest figures show that, since 2011, the total number of staff in the police force has dropped by almost 2,000 individuals. The police force in Scotland is weaker under the Government.

Does the First Minister not realise how damaging that has been to the police in this country? Does she not understand how much harder that has made their jobs?

**The First Minister:** Kezia Dugdale seems to want to criticise the Scottish Government for deciding to integrate our police services to protect front-line police officers. Before we have a complete rewriting of history, I remind members of what was in Scottish Labour's manifesto for the 2011 election. It said:

"To increase administrative efficiencies and free up resources for the frontline, Scottish Labour will legislate to deliver a single police force for Scotland."

In other words, Labour called on the Scottish Government to do exactly what we have done.

I hope that we can continue to discuss the issue in an appropriate tone and I certainly welcome the tone of Kezia Dugdale's earlier questions.

There have been recruitment issues at Bilston Glen in particular, but since March Police Scotland has conducted an active recruitment campaign that has received 1,600 applications. Recruitment and training are now under way and around 40 new starts are undergoing training each month. Improvements are being made.

I do not take the view that it is simply a case of looking at response times when calls are made; we have to look at the quality of the response and the inspectorate makes that point. However, response times are improving.

The Government will not shy away from taking the action that requires to be taken. Michael Matheson will set out more detail about how we will resource and support the police in implementing the recommendation in full.

**Kezia Dugdale:** The Scottish Labour Party manifesto supported the creation of a national police force. What the First Minister will not find in that manifesto is any plans to cut 2,000 civilian staff. The First Minister might call them administrative efficiencies but we think that they

are hard-working people trying to do their job to keep people safe.

In the two years since Police Scotland was established, we have seen searches on children spiralling out of control, police counters closed, allegations of spying on journalists, police being armed without the consent of the Parliament or the Scottish people, and two tragic deaths. Every day, men and women put their personal safety on the line to keep people safe and they have been let down. This has been an unnecessary crisis and tragedy, caused by blind adherence to a Government policy that demands savings.

In the summer, the First Minister's Government closed ranks with the top brass and let rank-and-file police officers take the blame. After years of denying that there is a problem, does the First Minister now accept that her plans for reform have major shortcomings and that the case for a truly independent and effective police authority is now unanswerable?

**The First Minister:** I remind Kezia Dugdale that her party's manifesto called for cost efficiencies to be made and recognised the necessity of that given the budget constraints that we faced. To the best of my knowledge—the finance secretary will be able to correct me if I am wrong—Scottish Labour has never come to the Scottish Government during the budget process to ask for more money to be spent on the police. I simply point out those facts as background and context to Kezia Dugdale's line of questioning.

I highly value and appreciate the efforts of all our police officers and civilian staff who work in our police. All the issues that Kezia Dugdale has raised today demand and will get a serious response. However, let us not forget something else: our police service has helped to bring crime in this country to a 40-year low. This country is safer as a result of what we have done to protect officer numbers on the front line. The credit for that goes to police staff right across the country.

### Prime Minister (Meetings)

**2. Ruth Davidson (Glasgow) (Con):** To ask the First Minister when she will next meet the Prime Minister. (S4F-02915)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** I have no plans in the near future.

**Ruth Davidson:** This morning's police watchdog report into the deaths of John Yuill and Lamara Bell shows that staff shortages in call centres are creating an "additional risk" that vital calls to the police are not being handled properly. We know from last week that thousands of routine calls to the Dundee control room are still not answered in time because of staff shortage and absence.

Those events did not come out of the blue. They were predicted as a direct consequence of the Government's centralisation agenda. The then justice minister was warned that this would happen; the Scottish Police Authority was warned that this would happen; and the Scottish Government was warned that this would happen. Why did nobody take any notice?

**The First Minister:** Just in the interests of ensuring that people remember the background to Police Scotland, I remind people that the Conservatives' 2011 election manifesto said:

"we are committed to maintaining Police numbers ... In order to ensure we can achieve this at a time when the public sector has to make savings, we will merge Scotland's eight police forces into one."

I quote that for no reason other than to ensure that people who are listening to proceedings have the full context.

Far more important is that this is an issue that demands and is getting a response. Today's interim report by HM inspectorate of constabulary came about because the Cabinet Secretary for Justice asked the inspectorate to look in detail at the call centres' capacity and capability and at their processes. We also see in the report that there have been improvements in the response times to 101 and 999 calls. However, as I said to Kezia Dugdale, what is important is the quality of the response as opposed to just the time taken to respond.

We will fully implement the recommendation that HM inspectorate of constabulary made today and we will implement any recommendations that are in its final report. That is the right response to what was an extremely serious and tragic incident, and the Government will continue to respond in that way.

**Ruth Davidson:** I think that the 23,000 members of staff at Police Scotland do a heroic job, given the hand that they were dealt by the Government. However, their warnings could not have been more explicit.

The First Minister has talked twice now about context, so I will give her some. In January 2014—more than 18 months ago—Assistant Chief Constable Mike McCormick wrote in a report on the likely consequences of a reduction in call-handling centres that

"any reduction to the number of sites creates challenges in retaining existing experienced staff."

We know what happens when the calls get covered by staff without that experience—we end up having to commission reports such as today's.

Two years in, the Government's record on police reform is: call centres cut to the bone, with tragic consequences; a stop-and-search policy

that might not even be legal; and a hand-picked police chief who has walked away from it all. Is that a record that the First Minister is proud to stand on?

**The First Minister:** I take the view that the Government was right to move to a single police force because, in doing that, we have been able to maintain the extra officers on the streets of Scotland that I believe that people want and which the Conservative Party called for in its manifesto and—unlike Labour, it is fair to say—in successive budget discussions.

These issues are serious. That is why the serious response that Michael Matheson has made is the right one. We will respond to all the recommendations that are made. However, I am surely not hearing Ruth Davidson or Kezia Dugdale say today that, having been in favour of a single police force, they would have left the numbers of call centres that service that police force exactly as they were.

We took the difficult decision to reform the police force. It is now absolutely right that we properly support the police to implement that change, and we will implement the recommendation on the timing of the remaining phases of the modernisation process. I and Michael Matheson will ensure that the police are appropriately supported to do that. As I said, Michael Matheson will go into greater detail about that this afternoon.

As the matter has been raised twice and I have not yet responded directly to it, I thank John Scott for the report on stop and search that he has published today—a report that Michael Matheson asked for. The report recommends a statutory code of practice on stop and search, and I indicated on Tuesday in outlining my programme for government that we will provide that. The advisory group also recommends, although not unanimously, that the practice of non-statutory stop and search should come to an end. When the code of practice is in place, we intend to bring an end to non-statutory stop and search.

**The Presiding Officer:** David Torrance has a constituency question.

**David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP):** Havelock Europa has just announced a 10 per cent reduction in its workforce. It is a major employer in my constituency. What assistance can the Scottish Government give the employees who will face redundancy?

**The First Minister:** I very much share the member's concern about developments in respect of Havelock Europa and the potential impact that the situation will have on employees, their families and the surrounding area of Fife. I confirm that, when the announcement was made on Tuesday,

we immediately contacted the company to offer support for affected employees through our partnership action for continuing employment initiative. Scottish Enterprise is meeting the company today to discuss support for the business, in order to minimise any negative impact. I am happy to keep all interested members up to speed on the Government's involvement.

### **Cabinet (Meetings)**

**3. Willie Rennie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD):** I can tell the First Minister that I will join her tomorrow at the humanitarian summit. We can help individuals who are in desperate need, and we absolutely must help them. The pictures over the past 24 hours have been dreadful and we must do all that we can to help.

To ask the First Minister what issues will be discussed at the next meeting of the Cabinet. (S4F-02917)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** I thank Willie Rennie for that.

At its next meeting, the Cabinet will discuss matters of importance to the people of Scotland.

**Willie Rennie:** After repeated warnings about Police Scotland, the Scottish Government is finally beginning to act, with an end to industrial-scale stop and search, a proper examination of the serious problems in police call handling and a review of how Police Scotland should be held to account. That is progress at last, but I fear that the First Minister's plans do not go far enough.

Individual officers have told me that the pressure is on them to meet nationally imposed targets rather than concentrate on their community's specific needs. Before the new chief constable is appointed, will the First Minister agree to an independent look at the top-down target culture in Police Scotland?

**The First Minister:** I make it absolutely clear that I have no interest in a police service that is meeting targets at the expense of keeping communities safe. I do not believe that that is what our police service does. It is because of the sterling work that our police service does that we have crime levels today at a 40-year low.

In my statement on Tuesday on the programme for government, I indicated that we will take the opportunity of the appointment of the new Scottish Police Authority chair to review governance at the national level. Michael Matheson will give more details of that this afternoon. We will also take steps to enhance local scrutiny and accountability. I set out the plan to require the chief constable to attend local scrutiny sessions, and Michael Matheson will convene a summit on local scrutiny later this month. We would be happy to hear

further views and ideas about how we should enhance that.

I believe that the single police force that we have put in place is right, but I also believe that the Government has a sacred duty to ensure that we learn lessons and that, when action is required, action is taken. That is my job as the First Minister and Michael Matheson's job as the justice secretary, and we will not shy away from it.

**Willie Rennie:** That is good to hear, because concerns about call centres and stop and search were initially dismissed, although they were completely justified. Top-down targets are what led to industrial-scale stop and search, so I do not want the First Minister to dismiss the concern that exists about the target culture in Police Scotland. The staff survey report will not make comfortable reading. The First Minister heard the concern when she was with me at the Scottish Police Federation conference in the spring. Will she think again and agree to an independent look at the target culture before a new chief constable is given free rein for five years?

**The First Minister:** John Scott makes the point in his report today—this has always underpinned policing in our country, but it is worth reiterating—that operational matters are for the police, but the limits of police authority are for Parliament to define and decide on. That is the right balance of responsibilities.

I have said that, given where we are with the merger of the police forces and the experience to date, we will review national governance. Michael Matheson will outline the remit and process for that this afternoon, and all members of this Parliament—as well as all the people working in our police service and members of the public—will have due opportunity to feed into that.

I want to make sure that we have in this country what I believe we have and have always had, which is a police service that is focused on keeping people and communities safe. I repeat that we have crime at a 40-year low. That does not mean that we dismiss or do not listen to concerns that are raised, and we will not do that. However, it does mean that, as we listen to concerns, we should remember the achievements of our police service and make sure that we thank each and every one of its members for them.

### **BBC Charter Renewal**

**4. Richard Lyle (Central Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the First Minister what role the Scottish Government is playing in discussions regarding the BBC charter renewal process. (S4F-02909)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** As I set out at the Edinburgh international television festival last week, the Scottish Government is

committed to playing a full and constructive role in the process of BBC charter renewal as agreed in the recent memorandum of understanding between the United Kingdom Government, the Scottish Parliament, the BBC and the Scottish Government.

The Government is engaging with a range of interested stakeholders and the rest of the UK to ensure that a range of perspectives can inform the development of priorities for Scotland in the setting of the next charter. That is critical to ensuring that the BBC delivers for the people of Scotland and is truly representative of our needs and requirements.

**Richard Lyle:** I am sure that the First Minister will agree that the powers over broadcasting should be devolved to this Parliament. In the meantime, can she set out what the Scottish Government's vision is for the future of the BBC through the charter renewal process and what role we can play as parliamentarians to help engage the wider public on the future of the charter?

**The First Minister:** First and foremost, the fundamental point is that everything that the BBC does should be underpinned by editorial and creative independence. However, I want to see a BBC that better serves the needs of people across Scotland and, indeed, the other nations and regions of the UK.

I set out a number of proposals last week and I hope that they are considered seriously in the process of charter renewal. I think that there is a need for changes to the BBC structure to have a more federal structure; I think that there is definitely a need for fair funding of BBC Scotland; and I think that we need an additional TV and radio channel so that we can better represent the different interests of Scotland. Those are all proposals that we have put forward in good faith.

It is no secret that I think that control of broadcasting should be devolved to this Parliament, not because this Government wants to control broadcasting, as this is not a debate about whether—[*Laughter.*]

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**The First Minister:** Labour members laugh, but this is not a debate about whether a Parliament sets the framework for broadcasting; it is a debate about which Parliament sets it, and I think that the Scottish Parliament is better doing that than the Westminster one.

**Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** The BBC is facing a very tough licence fee settlement. We want to be ambitious for the BBC, but we need to maintain quality. Does the First Minister recognise that, while an additional channel may be her preferred option, a number of

options will need to be considered and that we need an open debate that is led by licence fee payers? Will the Scottish Government's engagement reflect that?

**The First Minister:** We are engaging with a range of stakeholders. We have put forward some proposals, but I am absolutely open to the idea that there are other proposals out there to be discussed. Maybe a good starting point in that process would be Labour stopping just criticising the Scottish National Party proposals and bringing forward some of its own.

### Genetically Modified Crops

**5. Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the First Minister what scientific evidence the Scottish Government used as the basis for its recent announcement on GM technology. (S4F-02920)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** The Government has always taken a precautionary approach on GM cultivation. Following the introduction of new European Union rules, we have announced our intention to opt out of growing GM crops. Our main consideration is as it has always been: that allowing GM crops could risk Scotland's clean, green status and the £14 billion food and drink sector that it supports.

It is interesting to note that our decision is being mirrored in other EU countries, such as Germany, and is welcomed by key agricultural and environmental stakeholders, as well as some scientists, who have warned of the uncertainties and potential negative biodiversity and environmental impacts that are associated with growing GM crops.

**Drew Smith:** I am sure that the First Minister has read the open letter to Richard Lochhead, which was signed by 28 research organisations, including "some scientists", I am sure, to express extreme concern that the decision

"risks constraining Scotland's contribution to research",

and

"is an approach to evidence that surprises and disappoints many scientists and non-scientists alike."

Will the First Minister tell us what steps she will take to engage with the Scottish scientific community that has expressed those concerns? Given that the decision was taken without the input of the chief scientific adviser, what efforts will the Scottish Government make to fill that important vacancy?

**The First Minister:** Well, of course we have a chief scientific adviser for rural affairs, food and the environment in post.

The decision does not affect research in Scotland, and I ask Drew Smith to look at it a little

more closely. The types of GM science that are undertaken in many of our universities and research institutes are unaffected by the decision, which relates only to the potential cultivation of EU-authorized GM crops in the open environment. We have taken that decision because we value the clean, green environment that supports our food and drink sector. That is the Scottish Government's position.

I have to say that I am more than a little surprised to learn that Labour is in favour of GM crop cultivation—I see that some Labour members are shaking their heads, so maybe there is a need for Labour to clarify its position. I think that it would come as a surprise to the albeit dwindling number of Labour supporters in Scotland to hear that Labour members are advocates of GM crops.

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** Not only have we not had a chief scientific adviser in post since December last year but there are eight vacancies on the Scottish Science Advisory Council and have been since January. When will those vacancies be filled?

Given that the First Minister just mentioned Professor Louise Heathwaite, the chief scientific adviser for rural affairs and environment, will she say whether Professor Heathwaite was consulted prior to the announcement on the banning of GM crops?

**The First Minister:** I have outlined the rationale—*[Interruption.]*

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**The First Minister:** I have outlined the rationale and basis for the Scottish Government's decision. I will defend the decision, because I think that it is right for a sector that is hugely important to our economy. I visited a farm just last week to hear directly about some of the issues—*[Interruption.]*

**The Presiding Officer:** Order!

**The First Minister:** —that are being faced by our primary food producers. Our food and drink sector is hugely important to our economy and if we want to support it we need to ensure that our clean, green reputation is enhanced.

That is the position. I will leave it to other parties to argue their own positions, and allow the people of Scotland to draw their own conclusions.

## Refugees

**6. Roderick Campbell (North East Fife) (SNP):** To ask the First Minister what assistance the Scottish Government can provide to the United Kingdom Government in relation to the refugee crisis. (S4F-02922)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** First, I welcome Rod Campbell's clear description of what we are witnessing as a "refugee crisis". People fleeing Syria are not economic migrants; they are seeking refuge and asylum, and above all else they are human beings.

We have repeatedly made clear to the UK Government our determination that Scotland plays a full part in efforts to offer sanctuary to those in desperate need. The UK Government's refusal to take part in the EU's collective efforts on relocation and resettlement is, in my view, utterly shameful.

As I have said, tomorrow I will host a summit of humanitarian and civic organisations—I have already extended the invitation to Opposition leaders—to look at what Scotland can do to support refugees who are seeking safety. It is my intention that we then put forward to the UK Government specific proposals on what Scotland can do and wants to do.

As First Minister I repeat that I am determined that Scotland plays its full part but, for us to take refugees as I want us to do, the UK Government first has to agree to take its fair share, and I call on David Cameron to do so.

**Roderick Campbell:** I welcome those comments and indeed the First Minister's earlier comments. Does she agree that fortress Britannia is the very opposite of what is required here and that what is needed is a pan-European approach? Does she also agree that we in Scotland could perhaps learn from the example of one of the smaller countries in Europe and the people in that country—Iceland?

**The First Minister:** I think that we could learn from many other European countries—such as Iceland, Sweden and Germany—that are, to be frank, taking a lead on moral grounds. I believe that, if there is to be a proper response to this refugee crisis, it takes the European Union and all its member states to come together to find that solution.

I also think that there is something else that David Cameron and the UK Government must stop doing. They must stop using their party's stance on immigration to get in the way of a human response to a humanitarian crisis.

David Cameron and I do not always see eye to eye on immigration, but this is not about immigration; it is about refuge and asylum, and we must respond as human beings. We simply cannot walk by on the other side; otherwise, that little boy, who we were all so touched by last night, will just become one of many, many more. We cannot and must not have that on our consciences.

**Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab):** I thank the First Minister for

her comments concerning the appalling situation facing those of our fellow human beings seeking refuge in Europe.

This week, German Chancellor Angela Merkel did not just welcome people to her country; she also stood in front of a group of right-wing protesters and told them that they were wrong. She said that there is in her country

“no tolerance towards those who question the dignity of other people.”

Those are in my view the actions of a leader. Does the First Minister agree that it is time that David Cameron demonstrated similar leadership and compassion, instead of continuing to turn his back on what are the most desperate people on the planet?

**The First Minister:** Yes I do and I echo 100 per cent the comments of Angela Merkel, which Patricia Ferguson has just read out.

The first thing that David Cameron has to do is show some compassion, because when I watched him on the television last night I did not see any of that. Let us start with compassion and then let us join it with leadership. If we show both of those things, we can demonstrate that the proud traditions that Britain has in welcoming refugees have not died in the depths of a Tory debate about immigration; they are alive and well. This is a welcoming country and will not turn its back on people who need us.

## Sewage Sludge Spreading

### **The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):**

The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S4M-13248, in the name of Margaret Mitchell, on sewage sludge spreading. The debate will be concluded without any question being put. Before I invite Margaret Mitchell to open the debate, I invite members who are leaving the chamber and members of the public who are leaving the gallery to do so quickly and quietly please.

### *Motion debated,*

That the Parliament recognises the level of concern about the spreading of sewage sludge on fields in and around the Falkirk area; understands that over 1,300 members of the community have submitted letters of objection regarding the practice to Falkirk Council; notes that community councils in the Falkirk area have lodged a petition with the Public Petitions Committee regarding sewage sludge spreading; understands that the spreading of human sewage on fields in the Falkirk area has aggravated health problems among local residents, including those with lung conditions and asthma, and prevented residents from opening windows, hanging out laundry or sitting outside during the summer months; further understands that sludge has been spilt onto roads during transportation and that a local primary school sports day had to be cancelled due to the stench from the sludge making children vomit; acknowledges that the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), Scottish Water, Falkirk Council and the Scottish Government are responsible for oversight of the various stages of sewage sludge treatment, transportation and spreading and that the Scottish Government is currently conducting a review of waste spreading in Scotland, and notes the view that there is merit in exploring alternative ways of treating human sewage as well as ensuring that the current practice is meticulously monitored so that local communities are not adversely affected.

12:34

### **Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con):**

This debate provides the opportunity to set out the intolerable conditions that residents in and around the Falkirk area have been subjected to as a direct consequence of sewage sludge spreading in nearby fields.

At the outset, I acknowledge and pay tribute to the commitment and perseverance of the members of Avonbridge and Standburn community council and in particular the convener Jo Hirst and secretary Doreen Goldie for gathering the necessary local intelligence to address this issue.

The stench from the sludge has meant that, at best, residents have been unable to sit outside and enjoy their gardens or to hang out washing. In some areas residents are not even able to open their windows on hot days, as the smell would make the rooms inside their homes unbearable to live in. At worst, the stench has resulted in

residents who suffer from lung conditions such as asthma experiencing deterioration in their conditions when sludge was spread on nearby fields.

Perhaps the most shocking incident occurred last year, when a primary school sports day in California had to be cancelled because the stench was causing children to vomit in the playground. It is astounding that even after that incident, which a local community police officer witnessed, absolutely nothing was done to address the issue, which has been on-going for not just days, weeks or even months, but several years.

All that has taken place despite members of the community council last year presenting a letter of objection signed by 1,300 residents to Falkirk Council regarding the spreading of sewage sludge in fields, and despite the local community officer who attended the community council meetings being made fully aware of those issues. More worrying still, threats were made to members of the community council when they approached an individual who was contracted by Scottish Water to treat and spread the sludge about the stench and the spillage of sludge on roads during transportation, which creates a potential hazard. Complaints were also made to the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and Scottish Water, to no avail.

I was made aware of the situation by constituents and the community council, which prompted me to hold meetings with SEPA, Scottish Water, Falkirk Council environmental health and Police Scotland, at which the community council was represented by Jo Hirst and Doreen Goldie. Various issues emerged from those meetings. Some of the sewage had not been properly treated by those who were storing and distributing it to local farmers, which resulted in subsequent severe health issues for local residents. There is an issue about the adequacy of monitoring of the storage and processing of sewage sludge. SEPA contends that pressure on resources means that those who store and distribute sewage sludge are expected to self-monitor, which is open to abuse and error.

There has been a total failure on the part of any of the organisations with responsibility for various aspects of monitoring sewage sludge processing and spreading to take the lead in addressing the problem. Key analytical statistics and information on pricing were not readily available from SEPA and Scottish Water. The discrepancies in the storage and monitoring of the sludge have led Scottish Water to consider whether to take over the treatment and storage of sewage sludge in house. That would ensure that the sludge was treated properly before being spread in dry pellet form on to fields, which should reduce the stench.

No one is responsible for the monitoring of sewage sludge that is shipped from England, or brought in from Northern Ireland, to be stored and spread in Scotland. Reports persist of lorries carrying waste to holding sites in the Falkirk area at 2.30 and 4 o'clock in the morning.

Speaking to the petition that was lodged by Avonbridge and Standburn community council, which is currently under consideration by the Scottish Parliament Public Petitions Committee, the petitioners noted that wet sewage sludge that has not been obtained from Scottish Water has been deposited and left on top of farmland, without being properly dug in. Given that, I hope that the Public Petitions Committee will recommend that the Scottish Government takes steps to end the practice of spreading human waste on fields, now.

Let us be quite clear that there is huge potential to make big money out of the illegal spreading of sewage sludge, with cash changing hands indiscriminately and anonymously. That presents opportunities for organised crime and money laundering. Ruthless individuals set up businesses that operate under different company names to make easy money at the expense of intolerable living conditions for local residents, and it is far from clear that there is due diligence in checking those companies' legitimacy.

Finally, in response to a parliamentary question that I asked about sewage sludge in April this year, the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Food and Environment stated that there would be a report from the review group during the summer. I would be grateful if, in her closing remarks, the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform could update the Parliament on the progress of the review and, crucially, commit to a timetable for action.

The unpalatable truth is that there have been discussions, meetings and consultations on sewage sludge spreading dating back to the inception of this Parliament, but the deplorable conditions that local residents have been exposed to remain unchanged. It is for that reason that an holistic approach is needed from SEPA, Scottish Water, local councils, Police Scotland and the Scottish Government, all of whom have, by default, failed local residents, subjecting them to a totally unacceptable living environment.

12:41

**Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP):** First and foremost, I thank Margaret Mitchell for ensuring that this important issue has been brought to the Parliament for debate. I also thank the members who signed my amendment to her motion. I know that Margaret Mitchell has put a lot



of effort into resolving the issue in Falkirk district, as have I.

As we know, the spreading of sewage sludge on farmland has come about as a result of a European Union directive banning the dumping of sewage at sea. It is an issue that has attracted a great deal of debate and a number of complaints in my constituency, not least in the Upper Braes area, which includes Slamannan and the surrounding villages.

I set up a problem-solving partnership meeting and held a number of meetings with SEPA and Scottish Water to try to ensure that my constituents were not inconvenienced in the way that they had been for a number of years. As Margaret Mitchell mentioned, more than 1,300 members of the community have previously submitted letters of objection to Falkirk Council regarding the process. As we know, Avonbridge and Standburn community council lodged a petition earlier this year with the Public Petitions Committee regarding sewage sludge spreading.

As a result of that pressure, Scottish Water has improved procedures for sewage disposal and is now transporting only dried sewage pellets to Falkirk district, which are treated before arriving for disposal in the Falkirk area. That is welcome progress indeed. However, as Margaret Mitchell said, sewage sludge is being received from firms other than Scottish Water, which is still an issue. The change in procedures at Scottish Water has significantly cut down on the smells emanating from the fields after spreading or from the heaps of sewage sludge that were stockpiled at various locations around Slamannan, but farmers are clearly still entitled to use that resource as a fertiliser.

However, there is another issue that the minister should be made aware of. Much of the waste that is currently causing inconvenience and annoyance to my constituents in Upper Braes seems to be food waste, not sewage sludge or pellets. It is being transported to a couple of local lagoons, and the gas created by anaerobic respiration during the decomposition of that organic material causes an unpleasant smell that can be confused with the smell emanating from the sewage sludge.

The smell from the trucks transporting that waste can also be overpowering, and I have had reports of children vomiting in the street, not just at the local primary school, after those lorries pass through the local villages. However, SEPA has stated that that smell is not a public health issue and that soil samples of the farmland where the material is spread indicated no public health issues at all. That is a major concern of mine, following information that I received from SEPA.

I have serious concerns regarding those lagoons, which are used to store digestate from anaerobic digestion, and I believe that there is a serious loophole that results in them not being properly regulated. They do not require any type of planning permission, so they are not regulated, and they do not fall under either local authorities' or SEPA's remit for checking, even though the product in the lagoon is being used in the production of sludge for spreading. I have also been informed by SEPA that it is unable to test the contents as it needs to know what it is testing for in the first place.

Although waste management operators are required to keep records, and although SEPA is entitled to inspect them, if we have unscrupulous operators who do not keep accurate records, there is no knowing what is being spread on the land. That worrying aspect needs to be looked at in more detail, and I have alerted SEPA to my concerns and expect to have a meeting with senior officials soon. I am also aware that SEPA is actively pursuing a meeting with Falkirk Council to agree each other's remits and responsibilities. In the meantime, however, the lagoons go unchecked.

Although I welcome the fact that in recent months Scottish Water has been diverting sewage sludge away from Falkirk district, I think that there needs to be a long-term strategy. We need look no further than Sweden, where only 14 per cent of sewage is spread on land, and the Netherlands, where I believe the vast majority of sewage is incinerated. In Sweden, incineration—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry, Presiding Officer; I have only just noticed the time. I will try to speed up.

In Sweden, incineration fits in with the larger Swedish goal of recovering the important minerals from the sludge for reuse, and currently 49.83 per cent of sludge in that country is disposed of through incineration. When sludge is incinerated through mono-combustion, the ash can be processed to extract phosphorus and other useful materials.

I will cut out the technicalities of the benefits of incineration and simply welcome the Scottish Government's sludge review, which I hope will have the end result of more appropriate ways of disposing of sewage—preferably through incineration—and look forward to tighter regulation of the lagoons used to produce sludge that will ultimately be spread on farmland. I also look forward to the minister's response.

12:46

**Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab):** I, too, thank Margaret Mitchell for bringing this motion to the Scottish Parliament, because my

constituents are experiencing many problems associated with the practice of spreading human sewage sludge. I also put on record my acknowledgement of the commitment of Douglas community council in my region and the other residents and constituents who have highlighted this concern.

In June, representatives of Douglas community council and I met Zero Waste Scotland, Scottish Power and SEPA in order to contribute to the review of this activity that I and other members in the chamber had called for. I found it heartening that the need for such a review had been recognised, and we welcomed the opportunity to express what it was really like to have this practice take place on one's doorstep. We valued the interest that was committed, but it needs to be ongoing. I was also encouraged by the willingness to listen and the acceptance that aspects of the current process should be improved. I understand that, as other members have mentioned, Zero Waste Scotland's aim was to have its recommendations with the minister by the end of August, and I would be grateful if we could receive an update today on the timescales for the work.

The use of human sewage sludge is an emotive subject, and although I recognise that ways of handling and disposing of human waste need to be found, I believe that the general public cannot continue to be subjected to the practice certainly as it stands, if at all. Odour, road spillages, increased heavy traffic and proximity to residential properties as well as the issues that members have already highlighted must be considered in the approval of suitable locations for this activity, if, indeed, it is to go ahead at all. Margaret Mitchell has already highlighted many of those concerns. Constituents of mine who live near the restoration opencast site at Glentaggart have been subjected to all the outcomes of this activity. Moreover, Glentaggart's location near Douglas Water and the nature of the site itself have led to serious concerns about the impact on watercourses.

Aside from the daily impositions on the local community, other wider aspects need attention and clarity. First of all, greater consistency is needed in the treatment of human sewage sludge. The public must have confidence that the sludge that is being used has been treated to remove the pathogens that pose a risk to human health. The Glentaggart site was regularly used by dog walkers; however, there has been no signage to warn the public about the spreading of sludge, and I have been unable to ascertain who is responsible for putting it up. That issue must be addressed.

In my inquiries into the sewage sludge issue, I was not reassured that the heat treatment process was being applied consistently. Can we be confident that there is a contingency for waste

treatment facility outages? Waste that is not heat treated must not be sent out for use. Even in the present circumstances and with the present regulation, it is still not clear to me whether that point is being addressed.

Secondly, the review has to ensure that the correct classification is given to the practice. Its current exempt status does not reflect the agency input that I believe is required to adequately monitor it. The categorisation needs to be changed to a higher risk category in order to enable adequate monitoring by SEPA—if, indeed, the practice proceeds.

Thirdly, there needs to be more robust traceability of waste. Traceability ensures that operators are accountable for their waste management. My Douglas constituents have concerns about the volume of waste that is coming into the Glentaggart site and, indeed, where it originates from. That information has to be quantifiable and assessed. The concerns relating to the practice are wide ranging—from public nuisance, to health and safety, to accountability. The review has the scope to ensure that those concerns are addressed by tightening the guidance and legislation at every stage of the process and I hope that it will not be a missed opportunity. I ask the minister whether the process should be continuing at all in the future and, if not, whether the alternatives are being looked at.

Finally, I associate myself with Angus MacDonald's remarks about the loopholes regarding food waste in lagoons. I am of the belief that we need another members' business debate to cover that issue, but that is for another day. I look forward to hearing the minister's remarks and again thank Margaret Mitchell.

12:51

**John Wilson (Central Scotland) (Ind):** I commend Margaret Mitchell for bringing this motion before us. The spread of sewage sludge is an important issue that affects a great number of people in quite a large area of Scotland. It is not just confined to the Braes area or to the Avonbridge and Standburn area—it impacts on many communities throughout Scotland. I hope that, by highlighting the issue today, we will highlight to many communities throughout Scotland that this Parliament is looking at the issue with some serious intent to make sure that changes take place.

The matter has come before the Public Petitions Committee, which I sit on, as a petition from the Avonbridge and Standburn community council. The council clearly highlighted the issues regarding the noxious odours that last for days or more, sewage waste damaging soils and water in

the area where it has been dumped, and the potential impact that that has on human and animal welfare. Margaret Mitchell ably identified the impact on children in the area.

As mentioned in the motion and as Margaret Mitchell highlighted, the spreading of the sludge has adversely affected people in the local area and their ability to do basic things around their own homes, such as hanging out their washing to dry or even opening their windows.

The issue is a serious environmental and social concern. I am glad that the Scottish Government has announced a review into the spreading of sewage sludge, but we must ensure that the review is an open, transparent and democratic process. Communities that are affected should be consulted and involved in the review.

There is no point in carrying out a desktop review or a review that just involves the officials who are charged with overseeing the legislation in this area at present. The review must involve listening to the communities concerned—the community councils and the tenants and residents associations—because those are the people who suffer the worst effects.

When the Public Petitions Committee heard evidence from Scottish Natural Heritage and SEPA, they highlighted that there was an inconsistency in who was responsible for monitoring, with some of the monitoring being carried out by local authority environmental services departments and some of it being carried out by SEPA. Clearly, that inconsistency has to be reviewed. SEPA said to the committee that there were inconsistencies in the legislation and in the regulations. We must look at those inconsistencies, and we must have a body that takes overall responsibility for ensuring that the sewage sludge that is being spread in Scotland is being adequately monitored.

Margaret Mitchell highlighted that it is not just a case of sewage sludge that is being produced in Scotland; it also involves sewage sludge that is transported from other parts of the United Kingdom without the appropriate monitoring and regulation being applied. That is a worrying factor for many communities throughout Scotland.

The other issue that I want to highlight is that the spreading of sewage sludge has taken place for decades, if not hundreds of years, but the difficulty that we have now is that, with the continued erosion of green-belt land and the building of residential properties closer and closer to farmland, the impact is becoming more apparent on members of those new communities, who might not be used to living close to a farm. We must ensure that the necessary regulation is in place.

I hope that the minister will tell us what action has been taken to consult the affected communities and those that are not at present experiencing an issue. We need to know whether their views have been taken on board as part of the review. We must ensure that communities are fully engaged in the process and that they know who is ultimately responsible for monitoring the spreading of sewage sludge throughout Scotland.

12:55

**Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):** I congratulate Margaret Mitchell on securing valuable debating time on what is an important issue for many people. It has certainly been the subject of much correspondence to my local constituency office. I would also like to thank my colleague Angus MacDonald for the time and effort that he has put into helping to construct a considered and evidence-based approach to dealing with this controversial matter.

I am unfamiliar with the exact situation in Falkirk, but many of my constituents in the communities of Barrmill, Beith, Burnhouse and Gateside have reported similar concerns as a result of sewage sludge spreading. Although it is not a direct public health issue, as a result of the storage and subsequent spreading of sewage sludge over recent months local residents have been unable to hang out washing, enjoy their gardens, open windows or even work outdoors. As well as the nauseous odour being a problem for many, swarms of flies had a serious negative impact on my constituents' reasonable enjoyment of their home and their local area.

Following the treatment of human sewage and industrial effluent at sewage treatment works, a residual sludge is left behind, which can be de-watered and used to produce sludge cake or sludge pellets. The industry refers to such products as biosolids. They can be used to fertilise land, but that should not be done at the expense of the quality of life of our constituents.

De-watering and the creation of pellets should tackle the issue that Margaret Mitchell raised in her motion, in which she pointed out that sludge residue had been spilled on to roads during transportation. That would seem to support Scottish Water's commitment to making the whole process safer and more sanitary through the use of pellets, but the use of wet sewage, as Margaret Mitchell contends, should be banned.

What has concerned many of us is the failure of the regulatory response to the genuine concerns that have been raised across many communities. Although in my constituency and in Falkirk this process has clearly caused significant public

nuisance, it must be remembered that up until 1998 such waste was simply dumped at sea.

I am pleased to note that, on 6 March this year, SEPA, Scottish Water and the Scottish Government began a formal review of the legislation and guidance in relation to sewage sludge use on land. In setting out the terms of the review, the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Food and Environment, Richard Lochhead, mentioned the benefits of the process but went on to say:

“Over the last year a number of public complaints have been made. In light of that I have commissioned a review of legislation and guidance to determine what is and isn't acceptable. I am confident this review will help to ensure we strike the right balance between the benefits of using sewage sludge and the controls that protect both the public and wider environmental interests.”

I was pleased that the review was to take into account the views of stakeholders and community groups and that it would ensure that a wide range of expert opinion and local experience would be heard. I look forward to the results of the review, but surely, after almost six months, they must now be due.

I trust that stricter controls and oversight will be introduced to ensure that communities are not adversely affected in the way that many of my constituents have been. It is clear that many people felt helpless. Whether they contacted the local authority's environmental health department or SEPA, it did not seem that anything was being done to alleviate their concerns and the difficulties that they had to endure over the summer months, and that is unacceptable.

I also note with interest the comments that Angus MacDonald made in his amendment about the merits of increasing incineration capacity to follow the northern European model. I believe that, along with the Scottish Government's review of best practice, that has the potential to alleviate many of the problems that communities across Scotland have been facing.

12:59

**Hanzala Malik (Glasgow) (Lab):** I, too, thank Margaret Mitchell for securing the debate. It is an issue that gets a lot of people quickly upset and one that has come before the Parliament's Public Petitions Committee on several occasions over the years, which just goes to show that feelings run high on the issue.

As recently as June this year, a petition was lodged on the Parliament's website calling on Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to ban the use of sewage sludge on land and look for acceptable alternative methods of disposal, as

adopted in other European countries—countries that are not that dissimilar to the UK.

Although we need to get rid of the waste somehow, no one wants a stink at their back door or in their local area. What makes a difficult situation much worse is poor management of the spreading of sludge—such as spillage, particularly while transporting between locations—and failure to provide fair warning to local residents.

Research by the European Union into exposure to sewage sludge shows that there is no evidence that it causes health problems, aside from the impact of a strange and unpleasant smell.

We need to get this right and, when it goes wrong, apologies should be made and lessons learned. To resolve the situation, other ways of disposing of sewage sludge should be found as soon as possible. The fact that it has taken more than six months to compile the report is unhelpful. People's hopes—particularly among those who face the problem—are for a much quicker response. I call upon the Scottish Government to take a good look at the issue with a view to finding solutions at the earliest opportunity.

I am concerned that, because of a lack of restriction, it is possible that the use of raw sewage might contaminate our land, too. We are familiar with how foot-and-mouth disease came about. If we use unsafe sewage on our land, it could be just as dangerous and have just as much of an impact on our agriculture industry as foot and mouth.

We need to take on board people's concerns. We are not accustomed to strong odours and, when they occur, it is very unpleasant. That is particularly the case for people who live close to where the sludge is being sprayed.

What also concerns me is the lack of legislation on the use of sewage sludge. I am fearful that it may endanger people in the long term.

13:04

**The Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Aileen McLeod):** Like other members, I thank Margaret Mitchell for bringing to the chamber the important issue of the spreading of sewage sludge on land. I thank Angus MacDonald, too, for his amendment.

The issues that we are discussing are crucial to the quality of life of the communities and individuals affected. Margaret Mitchell talked about the intolerable conditions to which many people have been exposed. I agree that that is totally and utterly unacceptable.

For that reason I am grateful to my colleagues for their contributions to the debate. I know how

tirelessly they have worked on behalf of their constituents. There is a petition before the Public Petitions Committee and there have been several parliamentary questions as well as written correspondence with the cabinet secretary. I appreciate and thank them for all their efforts in bringing the issue to the attention of the Parliament this afternoon.

As members will be aware, the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Food and the Environment, Richard Lochhead, announced earlier this year that there would be a review of the storage and spreading of sewage sludge on land in Scotland. The debate is particularly timely as it allows that review to be informed by the points raised this afternoon.

The sludge review is being led by the Scottish Government, SEPA and Scottish Water. The purpose of the review is to find ways to promote safe sludge storage and use, and to protect local communities, public health and the environment.

The scope of the review has encompassed the use of sewage sludge on non-agricultural land for the purposes of restoration, as well as the spreading of sewage sludge on agricultural land. It has covered licensing of operators and activities, as well as treatment, testing and storage of sludge and health issues. I mention health issues because when the smell and stench get really bad it can exacerbate pre-existing health conditions, so we are looking to address that.

The review has also dealt with land classification, traceability, data management and monitoring issues. In addition, the review has considered possible improvements to legislation and guidance.

Most important of all, the review has taken full account of the needs of local communities in dealing with issues that directly affect them, such as odour and noise during unsocial hours. We know also that communication and consultation with those who live near sites where sewage sludge is used are important—a point raised by Claudia Beamish—and so we have looked at that, too.

The review team has engaged with a range of key stakeholders, including members of Avonbridge and Standburn community council, as well as Claudia Beamish and her constituents from Douglas community council, local authorities and Health Protection Scotland. That has enabled the team to hear about local experiences and concerns and the evidence on environmental and health effects.

I am aware of the experiences of the constituents of both Margaret Mitchell and Angus MacDonald in the Falkirk area, and I know that there have been other incidents in Scotland over

the past couple of years that have led—rightly and understandably—to complaints. It is clear that sewage sludge has caused a significant problem in the Falkirk area, and I am pleased to see that Scottish Water has taken a number of remedial actions during the past few months to tackle those serious issues.

**Margaret Mitchell:** Can the minister give us a date for the publication of the review group findings, given that it is now six months since the group was first convened? Does she agree that those findings should include the crucial need to take a holistic approach and for one organisation to take the lead to ensure adequate monitoring?

**Aileen McLeod:** I was going to come to that point towards the end of my speech, and I will ensure that it is included in my remarks.

Since February this year, Scottish Water has imposed a complete embargo on any of its sludge and other organic materials being recycled in the Falkirk area. There has also been an increase in auditing of contractors' activities, including spot checks by Scottish Water, and more monitoring of material stockpiles held by contractors.

In addition, community councils in the area now have direct access to Scottish Water waste managers. I understand that those actions have improved the local situation. It is our intention, through the sludge review, to make sure that that improvement is sustained and built upon, not just in the Falkirk area but elsewhere in Scotland.

Margaret Mitchell mentioned the sewage sludge that comes from other parts of the UK. The review has looked at that and is finding a way to try to deal with that issue.

Serious points have been raised by Angus MacDonald regarding the storage of anaerobic digestate. SEPA has said that it will monitor the situation and assess whether the storage of anaerobic digestate requires further regulatory control. I am glad to hear that Angus MacDonald is meeting SEPA to discuss those concerns.

It is clear from the concerns that have been expressed by the public and reflected in Parliament this afternoon that the outcomes from the sewage sludge review are awaited with great interest. We want to ensure that, where sludge is stored or spread to land, it is done safely and does not cause nuisance or inconvenience to the general public.

We are confident that the sludge review will identify ways to avoid incidents of the kind that we have heard about today, which have been totally and utterly unacceptable. I understand that the review group will shortly submit its conclusions—it will be later this month—for ministers to consider how to proceed.

It is important to stress that we will consult on any proposed actions that may involve changes to legislation or statutory guidance. As part of our better environmental regulation programme, the Scottish Government and SEPA are working jointly to deliver a new environmental enforcement framework for Scotland that includes a range of new proportionate, enforceable measures for SEPA.

I close by reiterating my thanks to Margaret Mitchell and all the other members who have spoken in this afternoon's debate for bringing such an important issue to the chamber. I thank them for their contributions, which have been extremely helpful in taking the review forward.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I thank you all for taking part in this important debate.

13:11

*Meeting suspended.*

14:15

*On resuming—*

## Policing

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** The first item of business this afternoon is a statement by Michael Matheson on policing. The cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of his statement, and there should therefore be no interventions or interruptions.

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Michael Matheson):** I welcome this early opportunity to update Parliament on policing in Scotland.

Our police officers and those who work to support them continue to do an excellent job in challenging circumstances, and I pay tribute to them again—all the men and women within Police Scotland who work day in, day out to protect our communities.

Crime is at a 40-year low, with violent crime at its lowest level since 1974, and there is now more consistent access to specialist expertise and equipment across the country. Credit for this goes to the officers and staff across Police Scotland.

We were all shocked and saddened by the terrible incident that claimed the lives of Lamara Bell and John Yuill. Our thoughts continue to be with their families and friends.

Police Scotland has publicly apologised and, on behalf of this Government, I repeat my sympathies. I also apologise to the families for the loss of their loved ones. We are truly sorry for what has happened.

The Police Investigations and Review Commissioner is carrying out an independent investigation into the circumstances of the incident under the direction of the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, and it is a live and on-going investigation.

The remit of the review by Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary in Scotland that I instructed was to provide an accurate picture of the current capacity and capability within all control centres—both staff and systems—and the processes in place to ensure that all calls are handled and dispatched appropriately.

HMICS recommends that the reform programme for the control centres is completed as planned. However, it makes it clear that that should take place only when the current control rooms in Govan and Bilston Glen have a full complement of trained staff and when the systems and processes are capable of taking additional call demand from the north, when the new area control room in Dundee is fully operational, and after a detailed

and independently assured transition plan is developed and delivered.

HMICS recommends that centres in Dundee, Aberdeen and Inverness should remain open while that takes place. That is what will now happen. The remaining phase will proceed only once the Scottish Police Authority and HMICS are completely reassured that all the issues have been addressed.

Police Scotland states that the recommendation will require the accelerated recruitment of 70 to 75 call-handling staff to consolidate service centre operations, plus additional area control room staff to ensure that the combined north area control room in Dundee is fully operational before the closure of the Aberdeen and Inverness control rooms. It will also require the retention of staff in Aberdeen and Inverness for a period beyond 31 March 2016 to allow for an extensive handover of operations. This will, of course, be subject to discussion with unions and staff.

There is a cost attached to implementing the recommendation, estimated by Police Scotland at around £1.4 million in this financial year. I can confirm to the Parliament today that I am making £1.4 million of new money available immediately for Police Scotland to meet this cost.

The remaining phases of the change programme will be subject to regular and intensive scrutiny by both the SPA and HMICS. I have asked HMICS to ensure that any further recommendations on the operation of call handling are shared as the review progresses to allow the SPA and Police Scotland to act as quickly as possible.

The M9 incident had terrible consequences. I do not want any family to go through such an experience again.

We will also take early action on stop and search. In March, I asked John Scott, the eminent human rights Queen's counsel, to consider the legal framework around stop and search. His independent advisory group has reported, and I published its report today.

The group recommends that a statutory code of practice underpins how stop and search is used. We will implement in full the recommendations. I therefore confirm that the current system of consensual stop and search will end once the code comes into effect. I have informed the Justice Committee's convener that I intend to lodge appropriate amendments to the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill at stage 2 to give effect to that.

There are two further areas where investigations are on-going, and I will update Parliament on the progress of those investigations as much as I can.

The PIRC investigation, under the direction of the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, into the death of Sheku Bayoh in police custody is well advanced. Members will recognise that I am constrained in what I can say. However, my thoughts are with Mr Bayoh's family at this terrible time.

As the PIRC emphasised earlier today, a number of expert forensic pathologists have been commissioned, on the instruction of the Lord Advocate, to further investigate and to provide an opinion on how Mr Bayoh died. The Lord Advocate and the PIRC have met the family and are committed to keeping them informed of the progress of their on-going investigation.

Media interest over the summer has also focused on reported breaches of the code of practice on the acquisition and disclosure of communications data, which came into force on 25 March this year. A final determination by the interception of communications commissioner is awaited. The Interception of Communications Commissioner's Office—IOCCO—has made clear that it would be inappropriate for it to identify the forces under investigation while its investigation is on-going, and it has set out clear reasoning for that position.

In light of that investigation, it would not be appropriate to comment further, other than to say that ministers expect all public authorities to comply with the code of practice on accessing communications data. The press must be able to operate freely, with appropriate protections, and no individual should have their communications data improperly accessed.

Policing in Scotland has gone through the most significant public sector reform in a generation. Although there have been challenges, the creation of Police Scotland has allowed us to maintain officer numbers 1,000 higher than they were in 2007. That should be compared with the situation south of the border, where policing numbers were this week predicted to fall to their lowest level in 40 years.

National units are ensuring a consistent approach to the most complex and time-consuming issues, such as serious and organised crime, rape and murder. Those hard-fought gains would not have been achieved without the reform of policing in Scotland.

On Tuesday, the First Minister set out in the programme for government the next steps that this Government will take to strengthen policing. I will provide Parliament with further detail on how those issues will be taken forward.

Reform has increased scrutiny. With 32 local scrutiny boards, there are more councillors than ever before having a say on policing priorities in

their area. As Parliament will recall, to ensure that the day-to-day operation of the police is entirely independent of Government, Police Scotland is accountable to the SPA, which in turn is accountable to this Government, with the Parliament's Justice Sub-Committee on Policing providing regular and active challenge. There is independent oversight from HMICS and the PIRC, as well as from Audit Scotland.

Police Scotland has faced greater levels of political, public and media scrutiny than ever before, but I believe that we can strengthen it further. The chief constable will therefore undertake a new programme of scrutiny sessions, to provide more direct local accountability for the performance of policing in local areas. The approach will give local councillors the opportunity to discuss policing in their areas directly with the chief constable, senior officers and members of the SPA.

I want to explore further with local conveners how the approach will work, at the local scrutiny summit that I will hold on 23 September. There will be an open dialogue, and I will welcome contributions from members of all parties on how local scrutiny can be enhanced.

The Scottish Government set the national priorities for policing prior to the implementation of police reform. We will now engage with stakeholders and communities on setting new national priorities for policing in Scotland. We will do so in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders who have an interest in policing. This is an opportunity for people to tell us what they think the priorities should be in future.

Members will be aware that the chief constable announced last week that he will be stepping down. I thank Sir Stephen House again for his service and contribution to policing in Scotland. He provided leadership at a crucial time, with a strong focus on tackling violent crime, and he has made a major contribution to recorded crime falling to a 40-year low.

Members will also be aware that SPA chair Vic Emery announced that he will not seek reappointment when his three-year term ends this month. Following an extensive recruitment process, I can confirm that Andrew Flanagan will become the new chair. He will take up post from Monday 7 September. Andrew has served as chief executive, chairman and non-executive director in a number of organisations. He brings an abundance of experience in challenging and high-profile posts in the public, private and third sectors, and I am confident that he will prove to be an excellent appointment.

One of Andrew Flanagan's key early priorities will be to appoint a suitable successor to Sir

Stephen House, who can carry forward the process of reform to its conclusion and consolidate the delivery of its many benefits. The SPA has already started that process. I have already spoken to Andrew, and my immediate ask is that he undertake a review of police governance, supported by a reference group to contribute views and suggestions. That will ensure that accountability arrangements for policing can build on the lessons that have been learned to date, so that robust arrangements are in place for the future.

I have identified four specific areas on which I want the chair to focus: ensuring that local interests are effectively represented in the national scrutiny process; ensuring that the SPA has the appropriate structures and skills to undertake effective scrutiny; ensuring that the SPA, HMICS, the Scottish Government and the Parliament have the material and data required to hold Police Scotland to account; and reviewing how the authority works with other stakeholders, to ensure that its approach is rooted in partnership and contributes to wider objectives across the public sector. I have published the full remit of the review today.

What I have set out today is a significant and wide-ranging set of measures, which will strengthen policing in Scotland. I know that there have been challenges. Some events over the summer have prompted legitimate public concern. However, the fundamentals of our policing remain sound. We have a skilled and committed workforce of officers and staff, who deliver for our communities every day, and we have a process of reform to protect policing from the effects of austerity.

The actions that I am announcing will address the challenges and help us to learn from the initial years of reform. They will ensure that policing in Scotland is effective, accountable and community focused. I look forward to working with members to ensure that we have the police service that communities expect and deserve.

**The Presiding Officer:** The cabinet secretary will now take questions on issues raised in his statement. I intend to allow about 30 minutes for questions, after which we will move to the next item of business.

**Graeme Pearson (South Scotland) (Lab):** I thank the cabinet secretary for early sight of his statement. I welcome the tone in which he delivered it and I join him by offering Labour members' complete support for the officers and staff who deliver policing across Scotland in the interests of our community.

However, today we have received two weighty reports that reflect the significant problems at the



heart of policing across Scotland—problems that were unseen and untouched by the SPA and the Government until tragedy and controversy struck. Shortly after the cabinet secretary announced the call-handling review, he said that there was nothing to suggest that there had been a systemic failure or that the call-handling centre was overburdened. Given the damning contents of the HMICS review, which indicates the very opposite, will Michael Matheson tell Parliament on what basis he and the chief constable were justified in pointing the finger at an unnamed officer and accusing an individual of failure?

Scrutiny is about asking questions. Governance and accountability are about getting answers and justifications. In the light of the reports, will the cabinet secretary commit to delivering what I have asked for since arriving in this Parliament, which is an independent system of rigorous governance and accountability that aims to deliver the best police service in the world? Will he enable the SPA's incoming convener, Mr Flanagan, to be appointed by Parliament to undertake that endeavour?

**Michael Matheson:** Graeme Pearson referred to the two reports. He should be aware that John Scott was asked to review stop and search back in March, not in the summer. That report was commissioned and the independent advisory group was established in March.

Graeme Pearson made a point about the M9 incident. Following that incident, I had discussions with the chief constable after he had looked at what happened, and my comments were based on the advice that Police Scotland provided. As Mr Pearson will recognise, I instructed HMICS to undertake a review to address capacity, capability and process, in order to be assured on whether there were any systemic failings. I set up HMICS's review because I wanted assurance that nothing like this will ever happen again.

I welcome what we have had from the HMICS review so far, which is a way in which we can start to address the issues. Once we have the final report in October, we will be able to look at what further measures may be necessary. Given the range of issues that HMICS has already considered, I am sure that no one is in any doubt that it is conducting anything other than a very thorough and independent investigation of all call handling by Police Scotland.

Mr Pearson has raised the issues of scrutiny, accountability and how the national process fits into the local process. He raised those issues with me in June, when I was before the Justice Sub-Committee on Policing. I have stated that there is a need to tie local accountability into the national process. As I set out, the governance review will

be responsible for looking at how we can achieve that more effectively.

I am determined that we make Police Scotland accountable by ensuring that there is strong local community input into shaping how policing is provided in communities. We can achieve that much more effectively with the national review and the scrutiny summit, and by doing so we will ensure that policing is delivered in local communities in a way that local people want.

**Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con):** I thank the cabinet secretary for early sight of his statement. With an extra £1.4 million having to be allocated to recruiting support staff, it was clearly a false economy to make so many crucial support staff redundant in the first place. Those individuals are essential to the smooth running of our police force and to handling calls properly in an effort to keep our streets safe and protect the public.

Given the vexing problems that are associated with the centralised 101 call system, it is astounding that HMICS's interim report recommends that the reform programme for control centres should be completed as planned, especially given the concerns and complaints from rank-and-file officers about its operation and about the target-led approach to stop and search. Will the cabinet secretary therefore confirm today, as part of the governance review, that establishing a system of meaningful dialogue with rank-and-file officers is included in the SPA remit and that the Scottish Government, which has been in charge of policing for eight years, will ensure that that is delivered?

**Michael Matheson:** To make progress on the issue, I can say that the SPA regularly engages with staff associations and unions to discuss issues that are of mutual interest and concern. I have no doubt that there are ways in which it could improve that dialogue but, as the member will be aware, one of the four key areas that I have asked the incoming chair of the SPA to consider as part of the national review is how it engages with stakeholders and the contribution that they can make. I hope that Margaret Mitchell is reassured that the remit that I have issued to the incoming chair for the national review will assist us in ensuring effective dialogue with a range of stakeholders on how the governance of policing is taken forward.

**Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP):** I refer the cabinet secretary to recommendation 6 of John Scott's review group. I welcome the suggestion that the Scottish Government may legislate for statutory authority to search people who are 18 years old or under if they are suspected of carrying alcohol, but what if a child is suspected of carrying drugs or a knife for their own use, for sale

or because someone has secreted those items about them? Consent would not be appropriate and there could be urgency. Will the proposed statutory code of guidance deal with what is actually a welfare issue?

**Michael Matheson:** In its report, the advisory group identifies that there may be a legislative gap on the searching of under-18s for alcohol. However, the group is not persuaded about that, although it believes that we should have a consultation to consider the issue further. The group also considered welfare matters for children, and it was not persuaded that there is a need to make specific provision for that with a legislative change, because it believes that existing legislation deals with the matter. However, as I said, we are taking forward all the recommendations, which means that we will also consult on the statutory code of practice, so all parties will have an opportunity to scrutinise it and to comment on what its content should be.

Following that process, it will be my responsibility to bring the code before Parliament, and I have no doubt that, as is often the case with the committee that Ms Grahame chairs, members will vigorously and thoroughly consider whether the code deals effectively with all the issues that she has raised. I am confident that, by going through the consultation exercise, we can address any other issues that may arise before we finalise the code.

**Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD):** I thank the cabinet secretary for advance sight of his statement, and John Scott QC for his thoughtful report. For two years, SNP ministers insisted that they were comfortable with consensual stop and search and refused our appeals to intervene. Meanwhile, Police Scotland conducted 1 million unlawful searches, and young and vulnerable people were targeted. In February, I lodged amendments to the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill to abolish consensual stop and search. Will the cabinet secretary now undertake to work with me to end that utterly discredited practice?

I press the cabinet secretary to go further. In setting up the single police force, the Government set off a chain reaction that continues to build. Stop and search is just one indication of the top-down, target-driven culture that exists in Police Scotland. Will the cabinet secretary therefore go further and instruct an independent review of Police Scotland's management and culture?

**Michael Matheson:** As the First Minister set out on Tuesday in the programme for government, we have already instructed a review of the governance processes in Police Scotland. I have given further details of that today, and that sits

alongside the other work that we will do to build in further improvements to scrutiny.

The member referred to a top-down culture of targets, but she will appreciate that there is operational independence from ministers in setting targets for the police. I have no doubt that an incoming chief constable will consider what they believe to be the most appropriate way forward in setting any targets or setting the culture in the organisation. I also have no doubt that the SPA will want to engage with them on that.

As for stop and search, which the member referred to, I recognise her long-standing interest in pursuing that. It is worth noting that, over the past couple of years under Police Scotland, the level of stop and search has been dropping dramatically; indeed, it has dropped by some 40 per cent. According to the figures for June, which are out today, 69 per cent of searches were statutory and 31 per cent were consensual, which is almost exactly a reversal of the 2014 percentages. Significant changes have already taken place but, as I said, we now believe that a statutory code of practice should set out the powers of the police on the matter. Once the consultation has been done and we have finalised the code of practice, we will implement the end of consensual stop and search.

I am more than happy to work with the member on the amendments that she lodged to the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill and to consider whether they are appropriate or need to be adapted to fulfil the objective of putting the statutory code of practice in the bill.

**Roderick Campbell (North East Fife) (SNP):** Given how matters stand, does the cabinet secretary agree with Calum Steele of the Scottish Police Federation that, if anyone wants to see a real crisis in policing, they need only cast their eyes to our friends in England and Wales, where police numbers are set to fall to levels that have not been seen since the 1970s?

**Michael Matheson:** There is absolutely no doubt that reforming policing in Scotland was an essential requirement in protecting our policing numbers. We have continued to have 1,000 more police officers than we inherited back in 2007, and the structural reform that we delivered assisted us in maintaining those numbers.

It is clear that the failure to address some of the significant inefficiencies in police services in other parts of the UK means that they are facing significant cuts to police numbers. For example, since 2009, almost 17,000 police officers have been lost in England, and it is predicted that another 20,000 to 22,000—[*Interruption.*]

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Michael Matheson:** —police officers could be lost over the coming years.

I am absolutely clear about the benefits of police reform in releasing resource and helping to maintain our police numbers. As a Government, we will continue to move forward with police reform to ensure that we have the most efficient and most effective police service that we can have.

**Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** I have been supporting the family of Sheku Bayoh, who died in police custody this year, and I find it unacceptable that it took more than a month for police officers to provide evidence to the PIRC. The delay appears to have been caused by a memo that the Police Service of Scotland issued advising officers not to give evidence. That was a grave error. Will the review of police governance look at how Police Scotland responds to deaths in custody and examine the extent of the PIRC's powers to deal with such cases?

**Michael Matheson:** I am not sure whether the member is aware that HMICS has already looked into how Police Scotland deals with individuals in custody. The report, which was issued last year, showed significant improvements in Police Scotland's handling of individuals in custody and how it deals with such matters.

However, given that this is a live investigation, it is most appropriate to allow the PIRC and the Crown Office to undertake it in a thorough and detailed way, as the Lord Advocate and the PIRC have already set out. Once that process has been completed, it will be appropriate to consider whether further measures are required.

Over the summer, I discussed with the commissioner at the PIRC whether the PIRC has any concerns about the powers that it has to undertake such investigations. The commissioner's view is that the PIRC has adequate powers for the purposes of undertaking those investigations, but the PIRC keeps those matters under review.

As I have said in the past, if at any point there is an indication that the PIRC's powers are not adequate to undertake such investigations appropriately, we as a Government will act, but it is most appropriate to allow the PIRC and the Crown Office to complete the live investigation. Once it has been completed, we can consider whether further measures are necessary.

**John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):** I thank the cabinet secretary for taking on board some recent serious and tragic issues. However, I wonder whether he agrees with me that the overall picture in policing is very positive. Violent crime is at its lowest since 1974 and we need to keep the present problems in perspective.

**Michael Matheson:** As I said, the fundamentals of policing in Scotland are very strong and we intend to make sure that we continue to build on them. I also outlined that crime is at a 40-year low, with particular areas such as violent crime at their lowest levels. However, it is clear that there is more that we need to do to make sure that we continue to make progress in tackling crime within our society.

I have no doubt that, as we move forward, Police Scotland will continue to make a very significant and positive contribution to reducing crime in communities across Scotland.

**Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Lab):** The cabinet secretary has accepted the recommendation in the interim HMICS report to suspend the planned closures of the control rooms in Aberdeen, Inverness and Dundee. Therefore, does he regret that Police Scotland, the Scottish Police Authority and his predecessor refused to listen to the concerns that were expressed by control centre staff, police officers and elected representatives in Dumfries and Galloway prior to the closure of the Dumfries control room in May last year? Does he accept that, had the warnings given by experienced police officers and staff been heeded, some of the subsequent problems with centralised call handling might have been avoided?

**Michael Matheson:** My focus is on moving forward on that issue and on making sure that the issues that are identified by HMICS are addressed appropriately and quickly. It is important that the experience that we had with the M9 incident is never allowed to happen again and to make sure that all the systems and processes that we have in place are there to minimise that risk. That is why we are providing the additional £1.4 million to Police Scotland—it is new money to allow Police Scotland to take forward that work as quickly as possible. I have also asked HMICS to make sure that it flags up to both the SPA and Police Scotland any issues that it identifies over the course of its investigation in the next six to eight weeks to ensure that those issues can be addressed quickly and effectively. I will continue to engage with HMICS to make sure that appropriate actions are taken where issues have been identified.

**Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP):** Audit Scotland and HMICS were fairly critical of police boards and the poor level of scrutiny and governance in the past. We are probably seeing a greater degree of scrutiny and accountability than ever before. Can the cabinet secretary say more—*[Interruption.]*

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Kevin Stewart:** —about the scrutiny and accountability that Police Scotland will face in the future?

**Michael Matheson:** I think that any fair-minded person would recognise that Police Scotland is under more scrutiny than any of the eight legacy forces that we had previously. That is not just my view; that is the view of the chair of the Scottish Police Federation, who has made that very clear.

I believe that we can enhance that scrutiny and accountability yet further. As I said, the chief constable will meet scrutiny board chairpersons regularly—several times a year—to be questioned on local policing matters.

At the scrutiny summit that I announced back in June of this year when I appeared before the Parliament's Justice Sub-Committee on Policing, I want to look at how we can build on that and make sure that the good practice on some of our local policing scrutiny committees is rolled out to policing scrutiny committees in other parts of the country. I want to hear what those on the scrutiny panels think could assist them in undertaking that enhanced scrutiny. I have no doubt that members across the Parliament will want to express their view on how they believe that scrutiny can be further enhanced.

It is important to recognise that we now have more scrutiny of policing in Scotland than ever before, but I believe that we can build on the existing scrutiny process and make it better. In doing so, we will make sure that we have a much more transparent and accountable police force in Scotland, and one that the people of Scotland can have faith and trust in.

**John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Ind):** John Scott is an eminent Queen's counsel and he says in his report that there is a lack of a legal framework in relation to stop and search and that the practice is of "questionable lawfulness and legitimacy". Would the cabinet secretary acknowledge that many people will be astonished that, in response to that, notwithstanding the Government's legislative programme, he has said:

"I therefore confirm that the current system of consensual stop and search will end once the code comes into effect"?

Many people would have anticipated that he would have called for no stop and search to take place that does not have a basis in common law or statutory law. Does he appreciate that?

**Michael Matheson:** As the member will be aware, Police Scotland is presently operating on the basis that it has a presumption against carrying out consensual stop and search and is no longer undertaking any consensual stop and searches on under-12s. That is reflected in the

figures that I mentioned, which were published today.

I am taking the approach that has been outlined by the independent advisory group. It recommends that we should have a consultation on its draft code of conduct and that we should then have a phased introduction as a changeover takes place in how stop and search is undertaken. I think that the best thing for us to do is to listen to that advice and to take it forward. That is why I will move quickly to make sure that we have an amendment to the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill that will give effect to a statutory code of conduct and to have that implemented once the consultation process has been completed.

I think that we should listen to the independent advisory group, which says that we should move forward in stages. That will involve providing training and information for officers on the change of approach that will come about. In pursuing that approach, we can make sure that we get the balance right between the rights of individuals and the rights of the police to be able to pursue legitimate issues. I believe that the independent advisory group has struck that balance.

**Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab):** Does the cabinet secretary acknowledge that the 101 service centre in Aberdeen led the way in policing not just in Scotland but across the UK in pioneering modern call-handling technology? Does he regret the damage that has been done to the quality of that service as it has been run down over the past 18 months, as described in today's interim report? Will he now act to restore a high-quality public service by scrapping the closure plans altogether?

**Michael Matheson:** The member is almost inviting me not to go with the HMICS recommendation that the end model of the changeover of the contact and control centres should continue and that progress in pursuing that should be maintained. In the intervening period, we should consolidate and make sure that we have sufficient resilience in the other contact and control centres that are in place at the moment.

I intend to make sure that there is sufficient financial resource to allow the provision that is currently provided by the contact centres in Aberdeen, Dundee and Inverness to continue. I intend to go with the recommendation that HMICS has set out. The member's view is that we should take a different route altogether. Given the nature of HMICS's expertise in this matter, I am much more inclined to go with HMICS's approach than Lewis Macdonald's.

**Christian Allard (North East Scotland) (SNP):** I thank the cabinet secretary for his statement and

I agree that the fundamentals of our policing remain sound, as does the new structure.

On accountability, does the cabinet secretary agree that chief constables have stepped down in the past, before the creation of Police Scotland, and that the solution is not to change the structure, as has been proved south of the border, where South Yorkshire's police and crime commissioner resigned from the Labour Party but refused to stand down from office?

**Michael Matheson:** I believe that the overall architecture that resulted from the legislation to reform the police and fire services is right for taking forward those services. What we can do is strengthen elements of that architecture, particularly in relation to scrutiny and accountability. The measures that I have set out this afternoon, along with what the First Minister set out in the programme for government, will assist us in achieving that.

Now that the new chair of the SPA is in place, the process of recruiting a replacement for Sir Stephen House will move forward. I have no doubt that, once we have appointed a new chief constable, they will want to reflect on the present standing of Police Scotland and consider whether they want to take a different approach in various areas.

I am determined to ensure that there is a good level of local engagement in the decision-making process on how Police Scotland should move forward. I have asked the new chair of the SPA to take that forward as part of the wider governance review. I would expect that to be reflected in the new national standards that we set for policing in Scotland, which will provide the new chief constable with a clear sense of direction about what we expect policing to deliver in future.

**Margaret McDougall (West Scotland) (Lab):** I note that the cabinet secretary says that the chief constable will undertake a new programme of scrutiny sessions. What training will be given to local councillors, who already have a very heavy workload, to ensure that they properly interrogate the chief constable and the SPA board so that they are held to account?

Will the membership of the SPA board be reviewed, given that it failed to meet during the summer when there was clearly a crisis within Police Scotland?

**Michael Matheson:** I do not know whether the member missed the point that I made about the scrutiny summit later this month. The very purpose of that summit is to bring together the conveners of the policing scrutiny boards to consider how those boards—which are working very effectively and are doing a good job—can spread good practice to other parts of the country. By engaging

with those boards, we will hear exactly what support and assistance they think is necessary to achieve that.

If some of them need some training, we will of course look at that. However, it is important to ensure that the quality of that engagement translates into action in the response from the SPA and Police Scotland. I am determined to ensure that there is a step change in the way in which the governance of Police Scotland and the SPA is taken forward.

**Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab):** In relation to scrutiny and practice, does the cabinet secretary share my concern that Police Scotland will neither confirm nor deny that it is monitoring the activities of environmental, trade union and political activists or say whether that information is being provided to third parties?

Will the cabinet secretary, in Government time, bring a debate on policing to the chamber so that we can discuss all the issues relating to the state of Police Scotland?

Finally, will the cabinet secretary join me in condemning John Mason's grossly insensitive comments about keeping perspective? Mr Mason, people have died. You should be ashamed of your comments.

**The Presiding Officer:** Mr Findlay, you are asking questions about the statement, not the comments of others.

**Michael Matheson:** I shall deal with the two substantive points from Mr Findlay.

On the first point, I have no knowledge of Police Scotland having certain individuals under surveillance. If Mr Findlay has concerns about that, he could pursue it with Police Scotland. If he is dissatisfied with that, he could take it up with IOCCO—the surveillance commissioner—which would be able to look at the matter.

In relation to having a debate on those and wider issues, I should point out to Mr Findlay that, in a 17-minute speech on Tuesday, the leader of his party made absolutely no mention of policing whatsoever. In his closing speech yesterday, Iain Gray, too, made absolutely no mention of policing. They raised not one single point about policing. *[Interruption.]*

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Michael Matheson:** Given that the Labour Party has time for business next week—*[Interruption.]*

**The Presiding Officer:** Order. Stop the heckling.

**Michael Matheson:** If the Labour Party wishes to have a debate on policing, it is free to do so in its debating time next week.

**The Presiding Officer:** That ends the statement by the cabinet secretary on policing.

**Alison McInnes:** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. The ministerial statement that we have just heard covered eight distinct and important areas of concern about Police Scotland. I welcome the statement and the fact that time was extended to allow as many members as possible to ask questions. Nevertheless, our Parliament cannot possibly do justice to the matters that have been outlined in such a constrained format. Since Police Scotland was set up, the Government has not once used its debating time to discuss or review the impacts of reform. It is pertinent today to reflect on that.

Presiding Officer, I ask you to ensure that the Government's business manager has every opportunity to bring forward, as soon as possible, a debate in Government time on the important matters that the cabinet secretary has raised today.

**The Presiding Officer:** I thank Alison McInnes for giving advance notice of her point of order. As she is aware, it is not for the Presiding Officer to determine the business programme; it is for the Parliamentary Bureau to recommend the business programme. I suggest that, as a business manager, she raise the issue directly in the bureau.

## Longannet Power Station (Closure)

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** The next item of business is a statement by Fergus Ewing on the Scottish Government's response to the planned closure of Longannet power station. I will give a few moments to allow members to change seats. The minister will take questions at the end of his statement and therefore there should be no interventions or interruptions.

15:02

**The Minister for Business, Energy and Tourism (Fergus Ewing):** This statement concerns the economic consequences of the planned closure of Longannet power station in 2016, and the response of the Scottish Government, our agencies and partners.

We need to acknowledge that Longannet remains open and will continue to operate over the coming winter. Highly skilled staff and contractors will stay in place to produce much-needed power over the winter months when electricity demand is highest. While spare capacity across the United Kingdom remains perilously low, Longannet plays an essential role in keeping the lights on across these islands.

Just over a fortnight ago, on 18 August, Scottish Power confirmed that Longannet would close on 31 March next year, so ending 46 years of power production at the Fife station. Facing high transmission charges and rising costs of carbon, Scottish Power has concluded that electricity production at Longannet is no longer commercially viable. For the same reasons, the company has also decided not to progress development of the planned 1,000MW gas-fired generating station at Cockenzie in East Lothian, which was consented in 2011.

Those announcements are deeply regrettable and they reflect very badly on a system of transmission charges—introduced to Scotland in 2005 by a UK Labour Government—that makes it increasingly difficult to operate existing thermal plant in Scotland or to invest in cleaner replacements. The outcome of UK energy policy and regulation is totally irrational when new, cleaner thermal capacity is the very thing that is needed to safeguard our energy security.

Despite the huge scale and range of Scotland's energy resources, energy policy remains largely a reserved matter, and the Scotland Bill will not radically shift the status quo. We must suffer the effects of policies devised in Westminster that undermine our own energy objectives, which are to maintain a balanced, low-carbon energy mix

based on renewables, flexible thermal generation—fitted with carbon capture and storage—and greater energy storage. Although we have raised our concerns repeatedly with the Prime Minister, absolutely nothing has changed.

Before I outline our response to the planned closure, I want to underline the huge significance of Longannet. It is the largest power station in Scotland and the second largest in the UK, with capacity to power 2 million homes. The station directly employs 236 people in highly skilled work and sustains a large and valuable supply chain with hundreds of associated jobs in the coal, transport and service sectors. We know, for example, that around half of the coal that was produced in Scotland in 2014 was destined for Longannet.

It is against that background that I turn to the response of the Scottish Government, our agencies and our partners. As concerns over the station's future increased earlier in the year, both the Deputy First Minister and I visited Longannet to meet company and staff representatives. I also met the leader and depute leader of Fife Council in March and, without pre-empting Scottish Power's decision, we agreed to develop a joint response in the event of closure.

On 25 March, I made a parliamentary statement following the news that Longannet had lost out on National Grid's voltage control contract. Since then, I have had two formal meetings with Scottish Power, Fife Council and workforce representatives to assess the situation and consider ways to secure the best possible outcomes for all those who are affected. Those meetings in May and June set the foundation to build a collegiate and co-ordinated response.

Our initiative for responding to redundancy situations—partnership action for continuing employment—has offered immediate support for directly affected employees. PACE will continue to work closely with the company and workforce representatives to provide a tailored package of support. That extends to any employees who are indirectly affected, for example in supply chain companies. By providing skills development and employability support, PACE aims to minimise the time for which people affected by redundancy are out of work. Our statistics show that 72 per cent—nearly three quarters—of those who have received PACE support have obtained employment within six months.

We have also established a new task force to develop a joint, multi-agency action plan to mitigate the impacts of the closure locally and across the supply chain. The Longannet task force, which I co-chair with David Ross, the leader of Fife Council, comprises elected parliamentary representatives, local authorities, trade unions,

businesses and Government agencies including Scottish Enterprise and Skills Development Scotland.

At our first meeting, on 24 August, we agreed our focus and committed to produce an economic recovery plan. That will support workers to find new jobs, mitigate the effects on the supply chain, produce a master plan for the long-term future of the Longannet site and consider how best to create sustainable employment in the local area.

On Monday this week, 31 August, I hosted a supply chain event in Dunfermline to hear directly from a cross-section of businesses about the closure's expected impact on them and their staff. I listened to businesses from across Scotland that face losing substantial income, including small, family-run businesses that are concerned for their very survival. The event outlined the range of support that is available from the public sector for skills, training and business development. Our agencies are committed to working closely with affected businesses to help them through this worrying time and to support people who could be facing redundancy. That is a process of on-going engagement with the business community, and our economic recovery plan will be informed by the needs of business.

The coal sector, which is already challenged by low coal prices and reducing demand, will find the effects of Longannet's closure especially hard. The Scottish coal industry has put forward proposals to the UK Government for restoration coal. That initiative would introduce a carbon price support exemption for legacy opencast coal sites to incentivise the restoration of those sites and, in turn, bring the land back into use. That has potential to mitigate the Longannet closure's job impacts on the coal sector and help to sustain activity.

The UK Government committed to discussing restoration options for opencast coal sites with the Scottish coal task force in the chancellor's 2015 budget statement. Following that, I have written to the UK Government on three occasions to accelerate discussions. As a result of that, UK Government officials agreed to meet key industry players and Scottish coal task force officials last Friday, 28 August. The exemption proposal was discussed at length during that meeting, and the Scottish coal task force now awaits the UK Government's formal response.

In conclusion, I have outlined a series of initial actions that the Scottish Government, our agencies and partners are taking to mitigate the effects of Longannet's closure. Well before Scottish Power's closure announcement, discussions had begun behind the scenes. We fought hard to achieve a different outcome for Longannet while the UK Government refused to lift

a finger. We engaged the Prime Minister and National Grid principally on the ground of Longannet's unique contribution to Scotland's energy security and resilience.

Longannet's power is needed for the coming winter, and the station could, under the right circumstances, have operated successfully until at least the turn of the decade. Now that the closure has been announced, I assure members that the Scottish Government will continue to do all that we can to secure the best outcome possible from this disappointing situation. That is our duty to the employees affected, their families, the main supply chain companies that are impacted and the immediate and surrounding communities of the Longannet plant.

**The Presiding Officer:** The minister will now take questions on the issues raised in his statement. I intend to allow around 20 minutes for questions, after which we will move to the next item of business.

**Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab):** I thank the minister for the advance sight of his statement.

The announcement was a shock and a body blow to all the workers in Longannet, local communities in Fife and businesses across Fife and central Scotland. Did the minister ask Scottish Power, which is a global energy player, for a delay in the closure programme to enable all possible options to be explored? My understanding is that the transmission charges gap has been closing. We would certainly have supported that being looked at.

Given that 50 per cent of Scottish coal goes to Longannet, it is not just the jobs at Longannet that are under threat; jobs in the supply and freight chains right across Scotland are under threat. In light of the widespread concerns about restoration to which the minister referred, what is the current position on the sites that were already challenging, and how will the closure of Longannet impact on delivering the restoration projects that we urgently need across the country?

The announcement cuts across efforts to achieve a just transition to meet our energy needs. It is clear that colleagues who represent local communities will have detailed questions about the investment that the Scottish Government will put into a future for all those affected but, given that this week's programme for government highlighted the importance of thermal generation to Scotland's electricity mix and the importance of carbon capture and storage for our energy mix going forward, will the minister review the Scottish Government's energy strategy to ensure that we have a bridge to the future and that the jobs and experience of those affected by the early closure

of Longannet across the whole supply chain are not lost?

**Fergus Ewing:** I will endeavour to answer as many of the member's questions as I can.

Of course we urged Scottish Power to do everything possible to keep the station open. We did that over a long period and in a number of meetings, including ones at Longannet.

I have to point out to the member that it was, in fact, the Labour Government in 2005 that introduced the system of charging. It is a matter of fact that is not really disputed that that system of charging means that, as the company explained, the additional amount that it had to pay in transmission charges for access to the grid, compared with what it would have paid were it located in Kent, for example, was of the order of £40 million a year. In other words, the Scottish surcharge was £40 million. That followed from the system that the Labour Government introduced.

The member said that she believes that the gap was narrowing. I think that I can attribute that particular line of argument to a certain Brian Wilson, who wrote a piece in *The Scotsman* that I found somewhat on the splenetic side for my liking. Sadly for him, the facts were clearly set out in a response to that article by Keith Anderson, who, as the chief executive of Scottish Power, is in a better position to set out the facts of the matter. Far from the gap narrowing, Mr Anderson says in a letter that was carried by *The Scotsman* that the gap would not be £40 million but £50 million in 2017, so Mr Wilson's argument was wrong.

Sadly the Scottish surcharge means that, as many expert commentators from whom I can readily quote have said, it is not commercially viable to set up a new thermal plant in Scotland at the moment because of the Westminster penalty, nor to continue operating existing Scottish thermal plant. I will be happy to explain that to other members during the course of this afternoon.

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement and for the invitation to join the task force, the establishment of which we welcome.

The reasons for the early closure of Longannet have been much debated in recent weeks. The minister focused on transmission charging while glossing over a range of other matters, not least of which is this Government's obsession with wind power. He does not mention that the SNP's preferred alternative to the current transmission charging regime would, according to the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets, add a staggering £8 billion to consumer bills, hitting hardest in Scotland where fuel poverty is already too high.



As a representative for Fife, I want the priority now to be about what can be done to help the workforce and retain skills. There are opportunities to create jobs in the area from developing underground coal gasification, but the licence holder, Cluff Natural Resources, announced two weeks ago that it is putting its development plans on hold, citing political uncertainty. Should the minister not be trying to attract investors to Fife rather than scaring them away?

**Fergus Ewing:** The problem with attracting investment in new power stations was clearly set out by a commentator on BBC Radio Scotland's "Newsdrive" on 17 February. Referring to the current transmission charging system, he said:

"it does discriminate against Longannet, and that's a matter of concern for me."

That commentator, of course, was one Murdo Fraser MSP. He was joined by Alex Johnstone, who is not here today, but who said:

"I support the Scottish Government's argument that a more favourable charging regime would be welcome, and I hope that that will come forward."—[*Official Report*, 25 February 2015; c 44.]

Well, it has not. Finally, and just to complete the trio, Mr Brian Wilson said:

"The Ofgem decision on locational charging is just one part of the jigsaw, but it sends a clear signal. Their view is that generation should take place close to markets, preferably south of The Wash".

That is not an argument that Mr Wilson has rehearsed recently.

Mr Fraser referred to £8 billion. I must correct him, because the witness who gave evidence to the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee referred not to £8 billion but to £7 billion, but what is £1 billion between such commentators? The difficulty with the argument is that it is entirely wrong. Experts have subsequently confirmed that, rather than the £7 billion referring to extra costs for the Scottish consumer, they were largely based on wholesale costs attributable to the whole of the United Kingdom. That figure is therefore completely useless.

The stark fact is that Scotland generates 13 per cent of the electricity but pays 42 per cent of the transmission charges. Imagine if income tax in the UK was set at different rates: 13 per cent in England and 42 per cent in Scotland. That is an exact parallel to the additional tariff that is facing the company. If that were the case, Mr Fraser and his colleagues would be the first to condemn it.

**Alex Salmond (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP):** Is it not the case that, if we could move Longannet to central London, instead of paying a £40 million penalty in transmission charges, it would receive a subsidy of £11 million? After 10 years of campaigning against charges that Brian Wilson as

the energy minister for a Labour Government introduced, followed by the Conservative and Liberal Administration and now by a Conservative Government, we have received a slight modification of those charges, but nothing like what is required to eliminate the clear discrimination against Scottish electricity generation. If France, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands can pursue electricity policies without such discrimination, why can we not unleash Scotland's natural resources to help us to produce the most competitive electricity in these islands? Instead of parroting Ofgem's nonsense, is it not time that this Parliament had control of that organisation?

**Fergus Ewing:** It is a new pleasure to be able to entirely agree with the former First Minister from the front benches.

To be serious, if anyone is entitled to advance these arguments, it is Alex Salmond, because he has campaigned for a fair deal for Scotland on this issue not only over the past year but since the charges were introduced by the Labour Government. He is entirely right that we have a system of transmission charge apartheid in the UK, where Scotland is on the receiving end of extra charges. Although Murdo Fraser is grinning, smirking and laughing now, on the radio he admitted, along with his colleague Alex Johnstone, that that is exactly the problem.

I will quote independent experts who are outwith the political terrain. Professor Stuart Haszeldine of the University of Edinburgh said:

"At the moment, the transmission charging regime militates against the rebuilding of thermal power plant in Scotland."—[*Official Report, Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee*, 27 May 2015; c 44.]

That is very simple. It is not complicated.

Mr Fraser might remember that quote, because it comes from evidence that was given to him in the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee. Perhaps he has forgotten. I remind him that, in that same meeting, Professor Karen Turner said:

"The main obstacle is the network pricing, whereby generators are charged based on their distance from the population centres that they serve. There could be an argument that, based on that policy, no power stations will be built above the Watford gap."—[*Official Report, Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee*, 27 May 2015; c 5.]

**Willie Rennie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD):** I thank the minister for advance sight of his statement.

As the former MP for Longannet, I worked long and hard to try to get new investment into the plant, in order to extend its life and make it greener. I am, therefore, disappointed by the decision to close the plant, and by the decision on

carbon capture and storage, which effectively ended its life.

I am sure that the minister will agree with me that the UK Government's onshore wind policy is damaging. Has he considered the paper called "Powering Up" that was published last week by the Policy Exchange, which sets out a considerable opportunity for onshore wind in Scotland? Considering that organisation's association with the Conservative Party, I hope that the minister might consider that area of policy, because I think that we have to put inordinate pressure on the UK Government in order to get it to change its views.

**Fergus Ewing:** We are putting inordinate pressure on the UK Government to change its views and we will continue to do so. I look forward to meeting Amber Rudd on 21 September. I have not seen the particular article to which Mr Rennie refers, but I believe that it is correct to have high ambitions for renewable energy in Scotland, not least because we are the best place in the UK and, arguably, in Europe, to generate electricity from the power of the elements. That is the case for Scotland being the green powerhouse of the UK. That is the role that we have been playing—we have been exporting electricity to England 98 per cent of the time between the years 2012 and 2015. That is because of the power of the wind. Of course, last year, 49.8 per cent of our electricity came from renewable sources.

We believe that, in the light of changed circumstances and the abrupt withdrawal of support for onshore wind by the UK Government, we have to review matters to reflect the changing facts. It is a matter of total fiscal perversity to say that the UK Government should pull the rug from the least expensive method of generating renewable electricity, given that the contract for difference subsidy is £80 for onshore wind, which is cheaper than the £114 for offshore wind. That means, according to my maths, that the cost will be 34 over 80 more than it should be—or, to put it more clearly, as Keith Anderson did, consumers will pay £2,000 million to £3,000 million extra on their electricity bills because of the muddle-headed, perverse and irrational policies that are pursued by Mr Fraser's London bosses.

**The Presiding Officer:** Nine members still wish to ask a question, so I ask that questions and answers be brief.

**Cara Hilton (Dunfermline) (Lab):** As the constituency member for Longannet, I can say that the closure announcement is a devastating blow for the communities that I represent and for the workers and their families.

I, too, was pleased to be asked to be a member of the task force. However, given that the Scottish Government has long anticipated the closure of

Longannet by 2020, regardless of transmission charging—for example, that outcome is included in the Scottish Government's climate action plan and in its report on proposals and policies—why has there been no clear strategy to secure inward investment to Kincardine and Fife in order to manage the inevitable transition for the communities and workers?

We are now looking at 1,000 job losses in Fife and across central Scotland as a result of the closure, which will sit beside the job losses at Tullis Russell and Havelock Europa. Given the significant investment that was made available when Hall's of Broxburn closed, what money will the Scottish Government make available to the Longannet task force for regeneration activities?

**Fergus Ewing:** I was pleased that we pursued a bipartisan approach in the task force. That was right. Members will appreciate that we always seek to conduct such meetings—as we did in the case of the Longannet task force, which met on 21 August—in a way that eschews partisan politics and gets on with the job in hand. I welcome the fact that both Cara Hilton and Douglas Chapman MP attended the meeting. The Conservatives sent their apologies, so we hope to see them at some future date.

It is entirely wrong to suggest that there has been no strategy. In general terms, Scottish Enterprise's inward investment strategy is being implemented all the time, and the member will be aware that, according to an independent EY report, Scotland is more successful at attracting inward investment than any other part of the UK except London. I have played a modest part in that by, for example, meeting the chief executives of companies such as FMC Technologies and Oceaneering, which are both based in Fife, while visiting Houston on several occasions over the years. I am pleased that, in Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Scottish Development International, we have a team that is working around the clock on these issues. It is entirely unfair to them to suggest that they have not been working away behind the scenes, as they continue to do. Nevertheless, we are acutely aware of the impact on businesses and we are redoubling our efforts to ensure that every potential opportunity to provide alternative business and employment is pursued.

**Roderick Campbell (North East Fife) (SNP):** Will the minister outline what recent steps the UK Government has taken to work with the Scottish Government to create an environment that incentivises the huge potential of clean thermal technologies such as carbon capture and storage?

**Fergus Ewing:** I am working with the UK Government with particular regard to progressing the Summit Power captain clean energy scheme.

Both the Scottish and UK Governments have made financial contributions to that scheme, which is a 500MW scheme that would generate clean energy from coal with precombustion CCS. I hope that it will receive the support of everybody, including the Greens, because that is the only effective way to tackle climate change. The scheme would also deliver enormous economic benefits. We are working on that scheme and I will discuss it with Amber Rudd on 21 September. I am grateful to have the opportunity to make that point today.

**Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):**

The closure of Longannet is worrying for the Fife economy. As the minister knows, it comes on the back of other recent closures and redundancies. His statement referred to discussions with the UK Government on the carbon price support mechanism proposal. If those discussions are not successful, will the Scottish Government consider supporting and funding a similar measure for the Scottish coal industry? Will the minister say more about the plans for the long-term future of the Longannet site? Who is responsible for the future restoration of that site?

**Fergus Ewing:** We worked hard with the opencast task force, which has met 13 times, to persuade the UK Government to work with us to produce a scheme based on the coal industry restoration plan. That would involve an exemption from the carbon price support mechanism. Those matters are entirely reserved and within the UK Government's gift. They enjoy the in-principle support of David Mundell, the Secretary of State for Scotland, who has a constituency interest and has been supportive of the proposal. I hope that he will continue to be supportive and use all the influence that he can command as the secretary of state to persuade the UK Treasury to say yes, rather than no. We will take the matter forward optimistically, and as a matter of urgency.

**Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):** The operator—Peel Ports Group—of Hunterston coal terminal, which is in my constituency, has announced that a consultation will be held with the site's 95 staff members following the decision to close Longannet, in expectation of significant redundancies. Will the Scottish Government and its agencies work with Peel Ports Group to explore alternative uses for the terminal, which is suitable for the import and export of a wide range of bulk solids and liquid products as well as offshore decommissioning? While he is exploring all the available options to minimise the number of redundancies, will he ensure that partnership action for continuing employment is available to assist any Hunterston employee who is threatened with redundancy?

**Fergus Ewing:** Yes, we will. We have, of course, offered PACE support to Peel Ports Group in respect of the impact that the closure next year of Longannet power station is expected to have on it. I can also say that its representative attended the task force meeting and the round-table supply-chain meeting, so we are already working closely with Peel Ports. During the course of that round-table event, which I chaired on Monday this week, I referred to Mr Gibson's sterling efforts in campaigning on the issue. We are meeting and engaging closely with the company to see what can conceivably be done to assist it in addressing the very serious impacts of the Longannet closure, which will be faced by many businesses in Scotland. This is not just about one power station, hugely significant thought it is; it is about hundreds of companies that are impacted by the results of a decision that could have been avoided if the UK Government had been prepared to lift a finger.

**Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab):**

Looking to the future, will the Scottish Government prevent the same transitional issues from arising again with thermal plant closures and other changes by ensuring that there is a robust strategy to manage, with the unions, the inevitable shift to a low carbon economy through a just transition for workers and communities across Scotland, including those that are impacted by knock-on and supply-chain effects such as at Clydeport?

**Fergus Ewing:** I have already outlined the problem of higher charges for Scotland than England for exactly the same power stations, which means that we can devise any strategy that we want, but the strategy in itself will not alter the basic realities of the arithmetic that means that no company will invest in a part of a country where the charges are three times higher than those in another part of the country. I have, sadly, to repeat that it was a Labour Government that introduced that discriminatory system in 2005. Our strategy—as the former First Minister has advocated for about a decade—is to have for Scotland a fair system that would allow us to manage the transition to a low carbon energy policy.

**Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** It is not just Scotland but the whole world that is finally coming to recognise that we cannot keep burning coal to produce our electricity. As the decision this week on early closure of a coal-fired power station in Yorkshire demonstrates, it is not just a Scottish issue. Are we not facing a situation in which long-term planning for the transition is what is lacking? Is it not clear that the requirement for an immediate decision to set up a PACE working group only when plants and businesses close and redundancies are announced is inadequate? We need a much longer-term planning arrangement so that we invest the profits of outgoing industries in the development of the new.

**Fergus Ewing:** First, it would be a bit strange if we were to set up PACE activity before people faced redundancy. That would be absurd because the task force exists to help people who are made redundant—that is the point of PACE. Secondly, to take Patrick Harvie’s major point, of course we have a strategy: it is set out in our electricity generation policy statement. If he has not read it, I can easily provide him with a copy of it. However, I suspect that he is aware of it.

A major part of the EGPS, which was introduced just a couple of years ago, is that we need to have continuing back up on baseload. The EGPS recommended a continuing requirement of about 2.5GW of thermal generating capacity, progressively fitted with carbon capture and storage. Therefore, we do have a strategy—carbon capture and storage, clean energy from fossil fuel and removing carbon emissions—that is supported by the International Energy Agency and green groups in the USA, but which is apparently, although it is a sine qua non of achieving climate change targets, not supported by the party that advocates that case most fervently on most other occasions. I think that, not for the first time, Mr Harvie and I will have to agree to disagree.

**Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP):** There will clearly be knock-on effects from the closure of Longannet for supply-chain companies. For example, more than 30 train drivers transport coal into Longannet, and there are also shunter drivers, signalmen and fitters, many of whom live in my constituency. I have been approached by train drivers at Longannet who would wish to retrain to allow them to transfer from freight to passenger transport. Will PACE assist with retraining of the drivers, if requested?

**Fergus Ewing:** I am grateful for a sensible question. We confirm that PACE has been in contact with D B Schenker Rail UK to offer support. I was very pleased that D B Schenker attended the round-table meeting and I was grateful that the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen and other unions made the exact point that Angus MacDonald has rightly made on behalf of his constituents.

We are absolutely determined to make sure that all practical steps to tackle the immediate and direct consequences of next year’s Longannet closure are taken. Therefore, I am happy to undertake to continue to work closely with the company and its workforce representatives, as well as with Angus MacDonald, who has robustly pursued the matter.

**The Presiding Officer:** That ends the minister’s statement. I pass on my sincere apologies to the two members whom I could not call, but I have let the item run on for five minutes longer than was scheduled.

## Creative Industries (Economic Impact)

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-14048, in the name of Murdo Fraser, on the economic impact of the film, television and video games industries.

15:36

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** Parliamentary reports come and go. This one happens to be the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee’s 47th report of this session. I have counted them all out; I have counted them all in. We have had a few wins, a number of defeats and many a scoreless draw. Sometimes, there is a report that cuts through the morass—the fug of bureaucracy—and finds itself in real danger of making a tangible impact. That could be about timing, asking the right questions or simply the power of the evidence that the committee has heard. This is one of those times when the response is more than cursory, polite or, in the phrasing of Eric Blair,

“designed ... to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind.”

The committee’s report on the economic impact of the film, TV and video games industries has been rather well received. I have been through the Scottish Government’s response with my red pen and made a good many more ticks than I had expected to. I even made double-ticks, particularly where the words “agrees”, “accepts” and “welcomes” appear—and they appear frequently. That the Scottish Government, along with Creative Scotland, Scottish Enterprise and others, has accepted so many of our recommendations is indeed pleasing.

I have been called a few things in my time, but churlish is not one of them. I am pleased to report that we even managed to coax a pair of cabinet secretaries along to our final evidence session. Two for the price of one.

The test, of course, will be in putting the policy statements into practice. Fiona Hyslop has said so herself. We will wait and see what comes of the work of the newly announced film industry leadership group. The committee is looking for credible leadership, an inclusive approach, expert and timely advice, sustainable funding, the co-ordination of agencies, the nurturing of new talent and that apparently perennial but now most pressing of issues—the need for a film and TV studio here in Scotland.

I suspect that we all have a favourite Scottish film. It might be “Trainspotting”, “The Prime of Miss

Jean Brodie”, “Local Hero” or “Sunshine on Leith”. However, I wonder how many of us know how much the Scottish film industry is worth? The answer is £30 million. To put that into context, the United Kingdom film industry is worth £1 billion. We are punching so much below our weight that we are barely tickling the potential of what could be achieved.

It might be going too far to borrow an expression of Gandhi’s. When asked what he thought of western civilisation, he said:

“I think it would be a good idea.”

It might be a little bit too harsh for me to say, when asked what I think of the Scottish film industry, that I think that it would be a good idea. However, we have to ask where the next Scottish film will come from—the next “Local Hero” or “The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie”. The answer is, I am afraid, that it is unlikely to be made here in Scotland—not unless we are more serious about upping our game.

The creative industries matter to our economy. We ought to be supporting, sustaining and celebrating them accordingly. The Scottish Government estimates that the sector is worth £5 billion-plus, employs more people than the oil and gas sector, and boasts a higher gross value added than life sciences.

The committee’s inquiry considered three areas: film, which I have touched on briefly; TV, which I will come to; and video games, the passion of my children and I suspect of many adults, which I will keep till last.

I am sure that plenty of us are fans of “Game of Thrones”, but do we know that the people who made it originally wanted to film it in Scotland? Iain Smith of the British Film Commission told us that tale in evidence. The makers knew that Scotland was bigger and could offer more locations, but there just was not the shooting space inside. He told us that a show like that cannot be made entirely on location—it would not work. So, up stepped Northern Ireland. It had Titanic Studios, which sealed the deal, and the rest is history—well, not history exactly but a story of ambition, sex, warmongering, murder and dragons. We can draw our own comparisons with Scottish politics today—although perhaps we have fewer dragons. That story is now earning Northern Ireland’s economy some £40 million a year. On the back of “Game of Thrones”, Northern Ireland has built a wider TV and film industry based in Belfast.

The TV industry here declared itself to be, in the words of one witness, “depressed and disillusioned”. They wanted to know what the strategy was for better supporting the independent sector; they wanted less reliance on lift and shift, so that more programmes could be made in Scotland and in a more sustainable way; and they

wanted broadcasters to look beyond the limited and some would say myopic vision of London-based commissioners.

However, let us not be excessively glum—there are good stories to tell, too. Take “Outlander” for example, a huge TV success in the US—described, would you believe, as a feminist “Game of Thrones”. It is filmed entirely in Scotland, some of it in a studio in Cumbernauld and some on location, including at Doune castle and Culross, both of which happen to be in the region that I represent. I believe that VisitScotland is drooling at the potential for bumper visitor numbers on the back of that.

The numbers that relate to the video games industry in Scotland are something that we can all shout about. We have just round the corner Rockstar North, our new neighbours in the old *Scotsman* building. With the mind-bogglingly successful “Grand Theft Auto V” and—every child’s favourite—4J Studio’s all-conquering “Minecraft”, Scotland has two of the world’s fastest-selling entertainment products ever. That is extraordinary.

Perhaps we have not always appreciated the scale of that success or understood what the sector needs to sustain it. Creative Scotland’s Janet Archer told us as much. 4J Studio’s Chris van der Kuyl acknowledged the support that the fledgling industry had received during the 1990s from Scottish Enterprise. He told the committee:

“this is not a bleating session.”—[*Official Report, Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee*, 14 January 2015; c 24.]

He said that it would still be possible to gather the key players from the companies and agencies into one room to produce a coherent plan and that video games could transform Scotland into “the Seattle of Europe”.

However, the evidence showed that we want those who are developing the games to be more entrepreneurial and the agencies supporting them to be more agile in working alongside such a fast-moving industry.

The so-called gameification of other areas—whether education, health or tourism—is a fascinating development. “Minecraft” has been described as the world’s single biggest educational tool and we were told of games companies in Glasgow and Dundee working in collaboration with Cancer Research UK—a glimpse of the future.

Back to the here and now, there are two specific matters that came out in our report that I wish to raise with the cabinet secretary. I would be grateful if she could try to address both of them in the course of the afternoon.

First and foremost is the film studio. We heard in evidence just how important it is to Scottish producers both in film and TV that we have the studio capacity here in Scotland. At one time recently there seemed to be at least three separate bids coming forward, although there might be more—one at Loanhead, one in Cumbernauld and one in Glasgow. We need to know what is happening with that. What is the latest and what happens next? We understand that the Scottish Government cannot set up a film studio and cannot entirely fund it, but how will we decide which of the projects finds favour, what is the process for getting there and what is the likely timescale?

The second key point is the working relationship between Creative Scotland and Scottish Enterprise—or, I should say, the non-working relationship. Whether there was a clash of cultures or of personality or it was a case of conflicting priorities, the evidence was that the relationship was simply not harmonious. One witness even imagined the behind-the-scenes conflict as being on a par with “Borgen”. I hope that the cabinet secretary will update us on the latest episode in this drama, perhaps with a happy—and preferably non-fictitious—ending. That is a serious point, because our creative industries’ success is reliant upon coherent leadership.

The Scottish Government has declared its ambition for Scotland to be one of the world’s leading creative nations. All those working in film, TV and video games—and the committee—share that ambition. We have the talent, location and the innovation—all the necessary ingredients—but we must turn the bold statements and best of intentions into solid actions and sustainable outcomes. I commend the report to the chamber and I have great pleasure in moving the motion in my name.

I move,

That the Parliament notes the findings of the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee’s 4th Report, 2015 (Session 4), *The economic impact of the film, TV and video games industries* (SP Paper 704).

15:45

**The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Europe and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop):** I thank the committee convener for his opening remarks and I welcome the inquiry and this debate as an opportunity to shine a spotlight on the sector. They are very timely, because they come at a time of significant development for the sector. The Parliament is shown at its best if it can look at such an important sector, provide recommendations and see our response to those recommendations as part of the development. The debate is taking place at a time when much is

happening that we can share. We are in a time of good momentum for the sector, although there is much to be done.

The convener was correct to identify the sheer scale of the success of “Outlander” not just in promoting Scotland but in providing jobs, skills and production. That is very significant at this time.

On 28 May, the Scottish Government provided a very full response to the report of the committee’s inquiry. I look forward to seeing Murdo Fraser’s ticks and double-ticks, if he forwards them to me. As outlined in that response, we have already actioned a number of the recommendations.

In March this year, the Government published “Scotland’s Economic Strategy”. The creative industries were reaffirmed in that strategy as one of our key growth sectors. The creative industries employ more people than the oil and gas industry in Scotland and generate a higher GVA than the life sciences sector. We said that quite deliberately, because it is important that we give the sector the space, time and attention that other sectors in the purview of the public sector and Government receive.

Support for the creative industries has also been articulated in our programme for government. In that context, the Deputy First Minister and I have made clear to Scottish Enterprise and Creative Scotland that a memorandum of understanding must be put in place to ensure clarity of respective roles and set out effective joint working, so that support from those agencies to the sector is co-ordinated. That issue was identified by the committee and it is one that we are conscious of and able to deal with. Over the past few months we have made significant progress in bringing together those agencies to focus on how they can work collectively.

**Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con):** The Government said pretty clearly in its response that the memorandum of understanding was a priority and would be set up and in place by August. Has that happened?

**Fiona Hyslop:** In terms of progress, I am also committed to updating the committee on the timing of the release of the memorandum of understanding, and to ensuring that the committee and the industries are kept abreast of it. Over the summer, Scottish Enterprise and Creative Scotland have been meeting the industries, to seek their understanding of the importance of the clarification of those roles.

I will deal with the four areas that the committee focused on. The committee recommended that the Scottish Government evaluate what further support or incentives it could provide to the Scottish screen sector. The film studio is still subject to negotiation with the private partner and

progress is being made but, as the committee inquiry found, a studio on its own is not the only answer. It is important to have additional incentives to stimulate interest and investment from the private sector in our screen sector, and to enable us to compete with other locations.

That is why I am pleased to inform the Parliament that the Scottish Government and Creative Scotland have today launched a new £1.75 million production growth fund for film and TV. The fund, which will run from 2015 to 2017, is expected to attract more large-scale film and TV productions to Scotland and is the latest in a series of measures taken by the Scottish Government and its agencies to support the Scottish screen sector to grow.

The production growth fund and the £3 million of additional support for film production skills development that I announced earlier this year further enhance the package of public support for the screen sector over 2015-16. New figures show that public sector screen support for 2014-15 totalled more than £24.1 million, an increase of more than £2.5 million from 2013-14 and an increase of almost £8 million since 2007-08. In difficult times, people in the chamber will recognise the progress that we are making, so I hope that members appreciate and welcome that on-going support.

On video games, another set of welcome figures are those that were recently published by TIGA, the network for game developers and digital publishers, which showed that employment in the Scottish video games development sector grew by 9 per cent in 2014. That means that Scotland now represents 11.1 per cent of the United Kingdom's total games companies, compared with 8.8 per cent in 2012. Scotland also represents 9.7 per cent of the UK's total games developer head count, which is up from 9 per cent in 2012.

Those figures are extremely encouraging, but I also agree with the committee's recommendation that a detailed review and analysis of the Scottish video games sector is required to understand the financial and business support that it requires. Creative Scotland and Scottish Enterprise are therefore taking forward an initial process of monitoring the video games sector through a set of surveys that will be conducted over the coming year and will be produced in collaboration with the Scottish Games Network. The outcomes of the survey will ensure that public sector support is tailored to the needs of the video games sector, enabling it to grow and develop further.

In addition, the digital media strategy will launch this month. It will be followed by a series of focused sessions with sub-sectors, such as video games, to promote the strategy's messages and

bring the creative industries that utilise digital technology into the implementation of the strategy.

The committee made a number of recommendations regarding a sustainable Scottish television sector. I am already working with the broadcasting sector to determine what changes might be required to achieve a sustainable and growing sector, and the First Minister recently outlined the kind of federal model for the BBC, as part of the charter renewal, that we believe will allow us to achieve that. I am pleased that the Government recently signed a memorandum of understanding, along with the Scottish Parliament, on taking forward some of the renewal process, and we are currently in discussion with a range of stakeholders on developing policy options for broadcasting. I intend to discuss with all parties in this Parliament the emerging ideas that are gathering support, so, collectively, we have the opportunity to influence the BBC, particularly on the need to abandon the reliance on lift and shift, as identified in the committee's report, to increase commissioning and production and to increase the skills and expertise in the Scottish TV sector.

Skills Development Scotland has published its skills investment plan for the creative industries. That was done at the end of June and a skills forum has been set up to implement the plan. The actions identified in the plan will enhance the sector. That follows the launch of the information and communications technology and digital technologies skills investment plan in March 2014, which also came from Skills Development Scotland, with £6.6 million from the Scottish Government. Plans to promote that are in production and are also being effected and are supported by funding.

I am conscious that I have only a short speaking slot and that I have touched on only a number of key areas arising from the inquiry. I refer members to the full response from 28 May, and it is my intention to write to the committee convener shortly with a more detailed update on progress against all the recommendations that were set out by the committee. I welcome the debate, which is timely, on an exciting sector for Scotland. Let us take this forward.

15:53

**Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** I start by thanking the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee for providing a wide-ranging and engaging report on the creative industries in Scotland. The committee seems to have been effective, with money announced on the morning when the cabinet secretary was due to give evidence to the committee, and money announced this morning as we were about to have this

afternoon's debate, so I am pleased that the committee decided to hold the inquiry.

With more than 100,000 jobs, more than £12 billion in turnover and more than £6 billion in gross value added, the economic contribution of the arts and creative industries must not be underplayed. The committee's report raises many important points that we must engage with in this short debate, including the issue of a film and TV studio in Scotland. When I first took on the role of Labour spokesperson on this area, the studio appeared to be imminent. There had certainly been a lot of interest in Scotland, as Murdo Fraser said, but so far nothing has come to fruition.

Over the past nine months, we have seen action, but not in Scotland. In June, Screen Yorkshire announced its plans for a new film studio just outside Leeds. That means further competition for the sector in Scotland; indeed, Screen Yorkshire has already started to show productions around its potential studio. Scotland has the skills and talent to be at the forefront of the film and television sector not just in the UK but throughout the world, but we lack a studio. Recent successes of films shot in Scotland include "World War Z" and "Sunshine on Leith", and there have been high-quality TV dramas such as "Outlander". However, for every "Outlander", there is a "Game of Thrones", and major productions have been missed due in part to the lack of studio infrastructure.

Moreover, Scotland's rising talent all too often feels the need and urge to go further afield to fulfil its potential. If Scotland had a film and TV studio, it would go a long way towards ensuring that skills and talents were retained and developed here.

We also need clear leadership, and one of the issues raised in the report is the confusion over the roles of the Scottish Government, Creative Scotland and Scottish Enterprise. We need clearer leadership from those organisations to ensure that we have a sustainable sector and a vibrant Scottish film and TV scene. The cabinet secretary mentioned the memorandum of understanding but, in her reply to Gavin Brown's intervention, she seemed to suggest that the situation was quite challenging and that we did not have the MOU yet. Is the cabinet secretary confident that all partners are committed to delivering for the sector?

I welcome the fact that the report and the evidence that the committee took seem to have forced the Government into action, with the creation in May of a film industry leadership group. The Scottish Government welcomed the establishment of the group so much that it was announced three times in the space of three paragraphs in Tuesday's programme for government. I think that there might have been a typo in there, but there certainly seemed to be a

lot of repetition of a certain paragraph. In any case, that must be only the start. Although we recognise the economic significance of the creative industries, the fact is that Scotland spends only £6.9 million on film.

One area in which support could be increased—and which must be debated in the context of BBC charter renewal—is lift and shift. I welcome the news that the quotas set by Ofcom for original productions by public service broadcasters are being met, but the lift-and-shift policy can be detrimental to the sector in the long run by failing to provide employment opportunities for the local TV industry. If we are to develop a sustainable TV sector in Scotland, the policy must be improved and must bring greater value to the sector. I was encouraged to see in the committee's report that the BBC has acknowledged the point and has recognised that the policy was a short-term mechanism for accelerating investment and that it now needs to ensure that companies that are based in Scotland are winning entirely new business and are drawing on the local population and talent base.

Beyond lift and shift, the charter renewal process must also look at the competitive challenges that face the BBC in the years ahead. I am not convinced that the solution is the creation of a Scottish-only channel; indeed, I have yet to see evidence that the Scottish public are calling out for that. The cost of setting up such a channel would be considerable, and at a time when the BBC is essentially having its budget cut by the United Kingdom Government, we must ask whether such a move is an appropriate use of licence fee payers' money.

I do not believe that the answer is a federal system within the BBC, as that would be the first step towards the BBC's break-up and would weaken the corporation. The First Minister's comments at First Minister's question time suggested that the proposal was more about politics and control than about what is best for licence fee payers. The model also raises concerns that, as we saw with STV and Downton Abbey, if we move to buying and selling programmes, we could find popular programmes being shown in other parts of the UK and not being available in Scotland.

If we want to be bold and radical, we must face up to and address the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for the BBC. The world of broadcasting is changing rapidly with BBC3 being moved online and more and more people using iPlayer, Netflix or other models, and we need to be more imaginative in finding solutions. If we are not, I fear that the BBC will be at risk of being attacked by the Conservatives while being squeezed by the Scottish National Party.



The committee has done an excellent job in highlighting the sector, and I thank it for its work.

15:59

**Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con):** I, too, commend the committee for its excellent work and its very robust report, which, I think, has already made—and will continue to make—a practical difference.

Of course, the Government will be judged not by its written response to the report but by the action that takes place on the ground as a consequence of it. We should be very proud of our film, TV, animation and video games industries, but there is much more to be done and, frankly, I think that we should be doing a lot better than we currently are.

One of the bits of the report that jumped out at me was about the lack of co-ordination between Creative Scotland and Scottish Enterprise. I was not on the committee so I did not hear the evidence first hand but, when I read through the report, that point jumped off the page.

Iain Smith of the British Film Commission said that Creative Scotland was

“not systemically set up to deal with the configuration of the business”.

Ken Hay said that Creative Scotland and Scottish Enterprise worked in isolation. Bob Last, an independent producer, said that the agencies

“have been set up to fail”.—[*Official Report, Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee*, 21 January 2015; c 36.]

The committee concluded at paragraph 76 of its report, without anyone disagreeing, that

“The separate and distinct remits of Scottish Enterprise and Creative Scotland are acting as a barrier to working cohesively to effectively support the film industry.”

In committeespeak, that is a damning conclusion. It is a conclusion that, frankly, should have shocked the Scottish Government and pushed it into action, yet five months down the line it is difficult to establish what progress there has been.

We even had Creative Scotland giving evidence, saying that it had not been set up in a way that enabled it to engage with other public bodies. I had to read that several times to make sure that I had done so correctly, but I think that I did—Creative Scotland was set up so that it could not engage with other public bodies.

When I asked the cabinet secretary earlier what has happened with the memorandum of understanding, I was disappointed with the response. I assume that the response was no—it was not stated quite as clearly as that—but the Government said in its response to the report that it was going to host a series of workshops and it was going to establish clear links and all that would culminate in a memorandum of

understanding between Creative Scotland and Scottish Enterprise, which would be published by August 2015. Clearly, that memorandum was not published by August 2015, but it is not even clear at this stage when it will be published and what the barriers are.

**Fiona Hyslop:** The workshops have been taking place and the memorandum of understanding will be published, but the creative industries partnership that brings together the bodies met only on Monday, so the timing might mean that the August date for releasing it has been missed.

**Gavin Brown:** I am not sure whether I am more or less confident after hearing that response. It was set out in a formal response to the committee by two cabinet secretaries that the memorandum would be published by August. Five months down the line, we are just hearing that it will be published; we do not know when it will be published. If it has taken that long to get to a memorandum of understanding, it does not fill me with excitement about where we are going to take things. The Scottish Government needs to do far better in that area.

Clearly, a number of welcome structural changes have been announced by the cabinet secretary, either in the response to the report or today. Whether or not the fresh funding flowed from today's debate is not hugely important in my view. The fact that the funding has been announced should be welcomed. However, we will not hear the results of how it functions until a bit later on and we obviously want to see those results, because I think that there were a couple of other funds—I noticed Murdo Fraser's questioning of the cabinet secretary during the committee stage about the loan fund for studio development; none of that money had been drawn down at that time. It is great to announce such things, but it is important that the money is drawn down and flows to where we want it to flow.

In my final minute, I want to touch on the video games sector. I was struck by the quotation that we want to and could become the “Seattle of Europe”. I think that that is a terrific ambition. However, if we are going to achieve it, we have to have far better figures and better knowledge of the economic impact of the video games industry. It is a dynamic, quickly evolving industry but, when I look at the Scottish Government's response to the committee, I see that it is still relying on figures from 2013 for employment and from 2012 for turnover. That is a couple of years' gap. Given that employment in the industry doubled between 2011 and 2013, I have to say that we are not going to become the Seattle of Europe if we rely on figures that are two years out of date.

You are signalling to me, Presiding Officer, so I am content to leave it there.

16:04

**Christian Allard (North East Scotland) (SNP):**

It is a bit difficult to follow Gavin Brown because, after the committee convener's opening speech, I had thought that we were going to have a very consensual debate in which we acknowledge that the Parliament and its committees work very well, even aided by a member of the Opposition, and the Government responds with a reassignment of funding.

On the back of today's debate, I would like to make a plea for my region, the north-east of Scotland.

A few weeks ago, I was denied a visit to the fantastic harbour of Portsoy. A couple of security personnel with what I recognised to be a Glasgow accent told me that the remake of "Whisky Galore!", based on the true story of the SS Politician, had chosen Portsoy as a prime location. I asked them in my well-recognised north-east accent where else the shooting was taking place and they told me that it was taking place all over the east coast. The day before, they had been in Pennan, the home of the iconic red phone box, and later in the week they were going down to Fife, where a lot of the popular television series "Outlander" was shot. I pointed out to the two gentlemen that all those locations were quite far away from where they came from. They were not complaining—the weather was fantastic.

A few weeks after that encounter, it came to me that the film industry in Scotland should be based in a central location. I give you Dundee. Over the past few decades, Dundee and the north-east of Scotland have developed and established a well-respected place in the growing industries of film, TV and video gaming. That is highlighted in the committee's report. I am delighted that the committee looked at this area, because the film, TV and video games industries are, as we have heard, primarily industries that generate employment and a vast amount of revenue for Scotland. The Parliament recognises their true economic value, and so does the Government.

I want to make my case for Dundee and the north-east to the Scottish film studio delivery group. The success of Dundee in the film, TV and video games industries is to do with not only its central location but the creativity of its people and their ability to attract creative people to live and work in the north-east. I cite the examples of Aberdonian film director and producer Jon Baird and the global hit computer puzzle game whose creators first met at a Dundee computer club.

The economic and cultural impacts that come from the creative industries are clear, strong and evident in the committee's report, which was published in March. I thank the committee for its acknowledgement of the need to review the current overarching lift-and-shift arrangement that operates among the large producing companies that are based in Scotland. The use of that method in the television and film industry is discarding another generation of Scottish talents and products.

In a bid to enrich and maintain the creative industries in Scotland and provide opportunities, it would be highly valuable for the new purpose-built film studio to be based in the north-east, in Dundee. The city of Dundee, which is understood as the small city of the future by the Small Society Lab, has a long and rich history in the creative industries. The promising future of Dundee could be made present with the new studio, which could allow it to exceed current aspirations for video gaming, TV and film. Everything could be under one roof in Dundee.

I want to make a final point about an article by Kevin McKenna in *The National*, in which he talked about the BBC TV production "Bob Servant" or, as he put it,

"the infantile Bob Servant, which is about as funny as looking for chips."

He added:

"Who needs England to misrepresent us when we seem perfectly capable of doing it ourselves?"

That is a fair point. However, when I first listened to "Bob Servant", it was on BBC Radio Scotland. It was a fantastic programme that perhaps did not convert well to television.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):** You might wish to draw to a close.

**Christian Allard:** We need to give the industry time to flourish to make sure that we produce programmes in the future that are as good as possible.

16:08

**Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab):** I add my thanks to the witnesses who gave evidence to the committee in what was an important inquiry. I was struck by the evident hunger of many people in the film and television industry and the video games industry for the inquiry, and by the robust way in which they highlighted their concerns about the circumstances in which they are operating. The challenge and the test for members of the Parliament will be for us to respond to the anger, the frustration and the sense of concern about what is happening in the sector, rather than hugging one another in recognition of what a great

inquiry it was. We must not become another part of what has been a very dispiriting process for far too many people in film and TV in particular.

We should be concerned about what the evidence shows is frustration and resignation. There is a stark contrast between the energy of the sector, which is fleet of foot in business terms, in that it develops new ideas, takes risks and creates opportunities for skills and talents to thrive, and an unbelievably slow and bureaucratic process, in which it appeared that having meetings about important issues was considered the same as taking action on those issues.

I say to the cabinet secretary that her explanation that the commitment to have a memorandum of understanding in August was not fulfilled because the bodies did not meet until Monday is no kind of response. I am sure that people in the sector have heard that kind of explanation too often over the months and years. We need to move on this, because the scale of frustration is a matter of concern.

I am concerned about the Scottish Government's response to some of the key issues. The key issue about Scottish Enterprise and Creative Scotland working together is not about working practices but about supporting the sector, and yet we are told:

"we acknowledge that our communication for the suite of services needs to be improved".

The response needs to be far more serious than that.

On the issue of the film studio, we might argue about where it will be located, but we are not even at first base on whether it will happen. The Scottish Government's explanation is dispiriting. People are crying out for a film studio and the Government explains that things are complex and difficult.

I want to make a couple of important points. First, we need to be clear that this is not just a culture issue—it is not just about how we enrich and support artistic talent. It is about how we can benefit economically from a thriving film, TV and video games industry and how, in our budget decisions, we can acknowledge the need to create the infrastructure to support that industry in the way that we support other industries.

We are talking not about subsidising creativity but about rational investment in a sector of huge economic potential, with knock-on effects on the broader economy, including tourism. We are talking about a rational investment to allow Scottish companies to compete.

A recent report suggests that an £11 million investment to secure the "Game of Thrones" series in Northern Ireland resulted in a £491

million economic benefit over four years. That is why we need to up our game. By not acting, we are not simply leaving things as they are; things are deteriorating. We are falling behind Wales and Northern Ireland, and now we see initiatives in places such as Manchester and Yorkshire.

The problem is encapsulated by the issue of the studio. A studio is not just a big space—the lack of infrastructure hampers Scotland. Glasgow won the Commonwealth games not just because it was good at sport but because 70 per cent of the sporting venues were built before the bid went in. The broader facilities that were available—in transport and hotels and so on—were acknowledged. That is why I support a film studio in Glasgow. It would be part of the media village, with room for expansion and a film school. It would fund itself.

We need a can-do approach. The people who came before the committee do not want us to pat ourselves on the back. We all care about the issue and must now ensure that the recommendations are acted on and that those voices allow the economy to benefit from a thriving creative film, TV and video games industry.

16:13

**Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP):** The arts and creative industries employ 130,000 people and contribute £6.3 billion to the economy of Scotland. The video games industry, which is one of the successful parts of Scotland's creative industries, produces internationally best-selling games in "Grand Theft Auto" and "Minecraft". We have ground-breaking university courses at Abertay University and Glasgow Caledonian University. Some of the largest companies in the games industry are located in Dundee and Edinburgh.

However, we need to examine the less-successful areas of the creative arts if we are to continue to grow that part of our economy. The television sector is a combination of public sector broadcasters and independent television production companies that employ 1,700 people in Scotland. In order to grow the television industry here, Scottish producers need to get a larger share of the £100 million that the BBC spends on programmes in Scotland. That is especially important because the budget is due to drop to £87 million in 2017, which means that only one quarter of the of £320 million that is raised in licence fees in Scotland will be spent in Scotland.

In recent years, television production has been increasing, with the BBC reporting that in 2013 nearly 11 per cent of the network budget was spent in Scotland, while Channel 4 was achieving just under 4 per cent spend on Scottish

productions. However, witnesses informed us of the difficulties that they had experienced in gaining access to commissioners in London, with no responses to either phone calls or emails requesting meetings to discuss ideas for programmes.

Alan Clements emphasised the importance of getting Scottish ideas back on network television, in high-end drama in particular. He considers that in order to achieve that the industry needs commissioners who are based in Scotland, focusing on increasing Scotland-based production.

If Scottish producers cannot get access to commissioners, how do the public sector broadcasters meet the Ofcom quota? Much of the increase in production in recent years is due to broadcasters' lift-and-shift policy, whereby production companies temporarily move to Scotland, bring their own film crews, actors, technicians and production staff, and return south when filming is over.

Drew McFarlane of Equity explained that moving a production and actors to a nation or region impacts on local actors' ability to gain valuable employment and experience. Jane Muirhead of the Producers Alliance for Cinema and Television highlighted that lift and shift frustrates the whole idea of building sustainable businesses because the intellectual property and the revenue remain outwith Scotland.

It is not just BBC funding that the television sector has difficulty accessing. Creative Europe is the European Commission's new programme to support the cultural, creative and audiovisual sectors, with a budget of nearly €1.5 billion over the 6 years to 2020. Connectfilm suggested that it is hard to access the fund because Scotland is defined as being part of the UK, which means that Scotland does not achieve the necessary points that are given for projects from countries that have low audiovisual production capacity.

In order to build a sustainable television sector, we need to emulate the success of the video games industry. The committee has called on the BBC and Channel 4 to abandon their reliance on lift and shift in favour of investing in production by independent TV companies that have permanent bases in Scotland. It also called for an increase in the number of commissioners based in Scotland and engaging effectively with the industry.

With the new powers coming to the Parliament in relation to scrutiny of the BBC, I am sure that members of the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee will ensure not only that the BBC has met its production and spend quotas for Scotland, but that the impact of its policies on our indigenous TV industry is positive.

16:17

**Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Lab):** I am glad of the opportunity to take part in today's debate and I am grateful to the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee for its report.

I want to focus on the film and TV industries, as I have been contacted by a number of constituents about their experiences in those industries and their concerns for the future. One person told me that he just did not believe that

"officials realise how important the Scottish film industry is" or the potential that it has.

It may be of interest to members to hear some of the comments that I have heard from my constituents in Glasgow who work in the industry. I hope that those comments will be of value as part of the debate.

"The Scottish film industry is lagging far behind the rest of the UK. There are incredibly talented people here who just cannot get the work and have to travel away from home, not through choice, but necessity to get work suited to their skills."

"It may seem glamorous, but it is hard to be away from friends and family and your home. Your life is put on pause and it affects the way people relate to each other."

That individual said that she is not alone in feeling that way, and that she believes that we have a dying industry in Scotland, one of the consequences of which is hostility in the business itself. She said that

"work is so thin on the ground that it breeds distrust in others talking about the few jobs actually coming up. There is no body issuing a list of jobs about to start, so it is all word of mouth. Until a person secures a job, they will not tell anyone else about it for fear of not getting the work themselves. If there was plenty of work around, the right person for the job would be picked and there would be a huge buzz about what was happening."

Some of the things that I have been told are reflected in the committee's report—most notably the fact, which other members have mentioned, that there is a lack of understanding and co-ordination between Creative Scotland and Scottish Enterprise, neither of which can claim to have done a good job for the industry. That is not good enough.

I have also heard frustration about the lack of a studio, which we have already discussed. There is irritation and cynicism that something that has been talked about for so long has not happened, but there are also hopes for what could be achieved. What we will need is not just a big empty space to put productions in, but a high-quality facility. Because Scotland is already behind so many of our competitors, our studio facility, if one is to be built, will have to offer something different—something above and beyond what can be achieved elsewhere.

The point has been well made to me that many of the skills in the industry are in and around Glasgow, so I take the view that a facility would be best placed there to maximise its potential. There are few industries of which it can be more accurately said that time equals money. If there is an opposing view about the location, I would be interested to hear what evaluation has been done to contradict the view that Glasgow is where the skills base is and that it has the most potential for growth.

The comments that I have shared are not just a list of complaints about support for the sector. They include insights from people who work in film and TV and are passionate about its success, and I hope that the Government will take them in that spirit.

We heard briefly about the BBC, and I will finish with a comment on that. As Claire Baker is, I am worried that the BBC could be caught between two Governments—one with an agenda to belittle it and another with a desire to break it up. Its future success would be best served by its making more programming in Scotland for network television rather than by seeking to divide limited resources. Scottish content is important, but it should not be seen as the BBC's sole contribution to Scottish life.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You must close, please.

**Drew Smith:** In the online age, I am not convinced that talk of another channel is the way to go. However, I can see that you are keen to change the channel, Presiding Officer, so I will desist at that point. [*Laughter.*]

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Many thanks. We are very tight for time now.

16:22

**Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP):** I hope that I do not seem too immodest when I say that it was I who, as a committee member, suggested an inquiry into the creative industries. As co-convenor of the cross-party group on culture, the subject is close to my heart. However, the success of the report is, of course, down to every member of the committee, our witnesses, our clerks and the Scottish Parliament information centre, which did a particularly good job in supporting us in the inquiry.

I was keen for the committee to hold an inquiry into the creative industries; in the end, we decided to concentrate on the screen industries. It is important that we recognise what a vital sector it is to our economy. It is the same size and has the same number of direct employees as oil and gas.

As the committee's convener acknowledged, the report is a testament to the Parliament's committee system and its ability to bring important matters to public and Government attention, and to give Scots a voice in their Parliament to shape Government policy and priorities.

When we embarked on the inquiry, we did not anticipate the debate on the future of the film industry and what it would generate. That emerged entirely as a result of the quality of the written and oral evidence that we heard and the efforts of two extremely impressive and formidable women, who also happen to be leading film producers in Scotland: Arabella Page Croft and Gillian Berrie. I pay tribute to them for their tenacity and the way in which they engaged with the committee. I know that Arabella and Gillian will be disappointed that we still do not have a film studio, which is one of the key recommendations in the report.

However, since the inquiry began, there have been a number of significant announcements, which have been alluded to. I refer in particular to the two new funds that were announced in February, which are worth £3 million; the fund that was announced today; and the Scottish Government's announcement in May of plans to form an expert group to assist the Government and its agencies to better understand the film industries. That was in direct response to the committee's recommendation.

Others have talked about this, but I think that it is worth re-emphasising one of the key difficulties that was highlighted by the inquiry—the failure of Scottish Enterprise and Creative Scotland to work well together. The committee made a raft of recommendations. As I have only four minutes, I will quote from recommendation 3, which refers to joint working. It says:

“The separate and distinct remits of Scottish Enterprise and Creative Scotland are acting as a barrier to working cohesively to effectively support the film industry. The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government provides direction to Scottish Enterprise and Creative Scotland to work in partnership in order to support the economic and cultural needs of the film industry, and reviews their performance annually against”

specific criteria. In response, the Scottish Government acknowledged that communication between the two agencies needs to improve, and it has set up a number of workshops, as the cabinet secretary mentioned.

On the point that Gavin Brown made, I decided to get my staff to call Creative Scotland today to ask about the progress of the memorandum of understanding. They were told that it is in the action plan and is still being drafted.

I acknowledge the Scottish Government's role in prioritising the committee's recommendations. It

has shown that it takes the matter very seriously. However, I am not convinced that the two agencies concerned have quite taken on board some of the inquiry's recommendations in the way that the Scottish Government has. Heads probably need to be knocked together. It was quite clear from the evidence that we took in the committee from the agencies that they just do not get it. I hope that pressure will continue to be put on them to respond to the committee's report as the Government has, and that we will see a way forward.

16:26

**Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** I add my thanks to my fellow committee members as well as to our clerks, support staff and the many witnesses who gave evidence in person or in writing. I got a lot out of the inquiry and significantly broadened my understanding of the subject. The committee has made a substantial contribution to the debate on the topic.

I had to endure a fair number of wind-ups from my colleague Alison Johnstone, who each week received her weighty papers for the Devolution (Further Powers) Committee that looked at the Scotland Bill, and teased me about the fact that we were off to play games. I thank those from the video games industry who brought some of their products and creations to the Scottish Parliament so that we could get a bit of hands-on experience of what they are doing, creating and contributing to the industry in Scotland. I would like to make a few brief observations in the time that is available.

The film, TV and video games industries are not all the same industry. We can put them under the heading "creative industries", but the circumstances and needs of TV and film are very different from those of the video games industry. TV and film, by their nature, are rooted somewhere. That is embodied very clearly in the debate about a studio and the sense of weariness that many of the witnesses clearly had after not just years but decades of discussion about whether we can create such a space in Scotland as a place that can attract substantial productions. They have to be rooted in a place.

That applies much less so to the video games industry. It is hypermobile not only because of its technical nature but because of the attitude to life of many of the people who take part in it. If we want it to become a lasting and growing part of the Scottish economy, we will have to find other ways of attracting and keeping it that are much more about the skills, the networks of people and the attitude to life—young people thinking not that we have to be the Seattle of Europe, but instead that Scotland is, on its own terms, a place where people can do that work without aping, echoing or

envying somewhere else and something else. The things that we need to do to attract, retain and continue to grow the video games industry will be fundamentally different.

I share the sense of frustration of the TV and film industries. Following Christian Allard's comment, in retrospect perhaps we should have broadened the scope of the inquiry to include radio, because many of the technical, writing and creativity skills that go into the TV industry find their way in or find a first expression through radio. Therefore, perhaps the scope should have been a wee bit broader.

The circumstances are so different. I share the frustrations about getting a studio. If we can attract more productions on the scale of "Game of Thrones" or the other things that such a space would bring, I will celebrate it just as much as I celebrate Rock Star having an office across the road and everything that it has done.

In all those areas, we also need to celebrate the little—the informal, small-scale self-starter creative who does not necessarily want to be the next "Game of Thrones" or the next Rock Star. Those skills and creative attitudes will be born and fostered in people's back rooms, bedrooms and coffee bars around the country, where people are working off their own bats and with their own creativity rather than thinking that big is the only way to be.

16:30

**Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab):** Scotland's contribution to film and television goes back to their very beginnings, but the truth is that we have failed to maintain that early advantage. Iain Smith of the British Film Commission told the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee:

"Twenty years ago, Scotland was the biggest production cluster outside of the south-east of England. Now it is probably fourth or fifth."—[*Official Report, Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee*, 21 January 2015; c 34.]

It is surely no accident that Scotland's loss of competitive advantage coincided with the abolition of Scottish Screen—a public body that had the specific remit of promoting opportunities in film and television. It is certainly not by chance that Northern Ireland has moved ahead of Scotland with its own screen agency and relatively greater level of public funding.

Of course, Creative Scotland was set up to replace Scottish Screen but, as Janet Archer herself told the committee, it was set up in a way that has made progress difficult. It has struggled to attract private investment and, as Gavin Brown said, it has even struggled to give a lead to other public bodies working in the same field. The lack

of clarity about the relationship between Creative Scotland and the enterprise agencies came up again and again in the evidence in the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee's inquiry.

There has since been a major reorganisation of Creative Scotland; the agency believes that it is now in a better place to negotiate and generate the relationships that it needs across the public and private sectors. That optimism is welcome, but the failure to agree a memorandum of understanding on schedule is a concern. There is clearly now quite a lot of catching up to do, which is the responsibility of ministers as well as the agencies.

There is a particular challenge for Creative Scotland to do more to support independent television production in Scotland. During the inquiry, the agency conceded that its film and TV broadcast fund is too small to do much on the television side. Welcome but modest increases in funding are unlikely to change that in any fundamental way. The challenge is to get the most out of other public sector agencies on funding sources to fill that funding gap.

The committee's inquiry found that there seems to be little flexibility available to Scottish Enterprise to support production companies because of its focus on account managing growth companies. On the other hand, we found that Highlands and Islands Enterprise could do more because of its remit for community development. There is surely a case for looking at how best to join up support for public bodies in skills and production, and to find ways to replicate in other parts of Scotland the effective support that is provided by HIE.

Perhaps most important to stimulating independent television production is the lead that has been given by Ofcom and public service broadcasters in setting and meeting quotas for production outwith London. That has helped, and enterprising companies, including Tern Television in Aberdeen, have been able to produce high-quality programmes for various channels across the wider UK network.

As Claire Baker and other members said, the time has come for the public service broadcasters to go beyond the interim approach of lift and shift and instead to deliver sustained long-term benefit for production companies that have staff based here permanently.

It is also important that commissioners be based here. Those who commission programmes will always start with high-quality producers whose work they already know.

**Fiona Hyslop:** The point about commissioning is absolutely vital. I agree that we should provide more independent productions for network television, but we also need commissioning and

decision-making here in Scotland. That is the proposal that we will make to the BBC.

**Lewis Macdonald:** I welcome the broad principle of that. Commissioning programmes as well as producing them is crucial. If all parties can focus on what public service broadcasters can do for the creative industries in Scotland and for the Scottish economy, that will be the right approach to take when we come to discuss the BBC's future and other related matters. If we do that, we can make a positive difference to the Scottish economy at this critical time.

16:35

**George Adam (Paisley) (SNP):** Although I am not on the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee, I am aware of the impact that the creative industries have on our economy in terms of jobs and investment, and the ways in which they can be used as a promotional tool for the various parts of our nation. They are a valuable contributor to the economy. As the committee's convener, Murdo Fraser, has said, the creative industries are worth around £5 billion and currently employ 68,600 people. They can also influence how the world sees us.

Much has been said in the debate about the progress that has been made towards the establishment of a permanent film studio in Scotland. The need for such a studio was articulated by many individuals from the film and television industries the last time that they addressed the Education and Culture Committee. A studio would make a vital difference, considering the new ways of broadcasting TV and film over the various platforms that are now available, including online subscription channels and digital platforms.

"Outlander" has been talked about today as an example of that new approach. In the UK, it is broadcast on Amazon Prime. I have read a bit about "Outlander". It is a drama series that is based on the historical time travel series of novels by Diana Gabaldon and was created by Ronald D Moore, of "Battlestar Galactica" and "Star Trek" fame. What is not to like about that? I know what I will be watching this weekend. As a fully certified film and TV geek, I cannot wait to see even further progress. We live in exciting times as far as broadcasting is concerned, and there are other opportunities within the industry.

Although progress with the studio is at an early stage, I can say that there is no better place for a film studio than the great town of Paisley. The creative talent is there, our geography is perfect for it, and the town has the domestic and international transport links that are required by such a studio.

Film and television can influence the way in which the world looks at us, our towns and our communities. For once, I would like to use my constituency as an example. Television and movies have had an influence on my community. A number of years ago a movie was made about the stone of destiny and Ian Hamilton—a Paisley man, incidentally—who reclaimed it in the 1950s. It was filmed at Paisley abbey in Paisley—well, obviously it is in Paisley—which stood in for Westminster abbey. That showed that we can use the historic buildings and infrastructure that we have in towns such as Paisley for that purpose, and has led to many TV production companies coming to the town.

The BBC has various on-going antique shows that travel the length and breadth of the country. One is “Flog it!”, which my wife was in. I am actually sick of hearing about that show, because it is broadcast throughout the world and family members across the world tell us about it constantly, as if it just happened yesterday instead of about five years ago. However, that shows us the impact of even a TV show such as that.

With regard to the different ways in which things are done in TV now, it is interesting to note that STV Productions produces a similar show for the BBC, called “Antiques Road Trip”, which has visited Paisley on numerous occasions because the production company recognises the history of the town and what is available there.

I welcome the report and acknowledge the hard work that has been done by the committee. We live in exciting times and now is the time for Scotland to reassert itself as a broadcasting and film-making nation.

16:38

**Gavin Brown:** This has been an interesting debate. I particularly enjoyed the uplifting contribution from Mr Adam—a man who I have to say never disappoints.

In closing for the Conservative Party, I will pick up on the points that I want the Government to focus on in the coming months. It is not activity that is important but action on the ground and the ability to make a real difference.

I welcome the fact that the Government agrees that there should be a review of the video games sector, to be led by Creative Scotland. That was a conclusion of the committee that the Government signed up to, and I was pleased to hear the cabinet secretary say that the review will begin shortly. If she has time to address the matter in her closing speech—if not, perhaps she could put something in writing—I would be interested to hear when it is going to begin and a rough timescale for it. Given the nature of the industry, it must happen

quickly. The industry changes regularly, and a typical industry review that might take a year or two would not be appropriate. I will give members a notion of the sort of changes that happen in the industry. According to Scottish Government figures, there were 200 employees in the industry in 2010 but 1,000 in 2013. That is a fivefold increase over a three-year period. It is an industry that is going places—with the right strategy, it could really go places.

I ask the Government to keep an open mind about the results of the review when it takes place, particularly regarding a national strategy. The committee suggested that there ought to be a national strategy for the industry, and although the Government did not dismiss the idea it seemed a little lukewarm about it and certainly did not commit to it in the written response that I saw. I urge the Government to revisit the proposal once the review has taken place and to pull together a national strategy. There is a digital leadership group of which the video games industry is a part, but, given the growth that we have seen over the past couple of years, it merits a national strategy of its own. However, let us see what the review turns up.

I do not know whether this is true—I hope that it is wrong, although it appeared to go unchallenged—but the statement is made in the report that there is no strategy for growing the television sector in Creative Scotland’s 10-year strategic plan. I would like the cabinet secretary to respond to that. If it is true, change needs to happen. The statement appeared to go unchallenged, but I may well be wrong about that.

I have talked about the memorandum of understanding, so I will say no more about that except that it is a priority not just for its own sake but because of the signal that it sends out to industry. If we cannot get that right, we will not see the cultural changes that we need across the organisations that are responsible for it.

We heard from the cabinet secretary about the £3 million of funding that was announced some seven or eight months ago, of which £2 million was a loan fund for production companies and £1 million was for the screen skills fund Scotland. It would be interesting to know what draw-down there has been of that £3 million. Are we in a better place, where that money is being put to good use, or do we face some of the same challenges that we faced with the previous £2 million fund?

It is for the members of the committee to decide their work programme going forward, but I make a plea to them that, having done all this excellent work and having pulled together a good report, they should have a follow-up session, perhaps towards the end of the year or early next year, at



which they get the same witnesses back and check on the progress that has been made so that we do not have a similar debate in a year's time or two years' time in which we talk about similar challenges to those that we have heard about today.

16:42

**Anne McTaggart (Glasgow) (Lab):** We welcome a number of the recommendations that are made in the report, including the recommendation that Creative Scotland lead the co-ordination of the industry, academia and public bodies to establish a national strategy that will deliver a sustainable Scottish games industry. We also welcome the funding commitments that were made today in advance of the debate. However, the report's finding that there is an apparent lack of ability among agencies to collaborate or work within the industry is rather concerning for many members. The "separate and distinct remits"—to quote the report—of Scottish Enterprise and Creative Scotland act as barriers to cohesive working to effectively support the film industry, which is detrimental to Scotland's culture.

As has been outlined in the report and in the debate, it is vital that a decision on the establishment of a film and TV studio in Scotland is reached as soon as possible, otherwise our film and TV industries will be damaged. We agree with the Scottish Government, its agencies and the film and TV industries that such a studio is a priority for growing the sector, and as a Glasgow MSP I believe that Glasgow would be best placed to accommodate it—I will go no further than that.

Claire Baker and Gordon MacDonald referred in their speeches to the Ofcom quotas for more production and greater spend in Scotland by public service broadcasters. That presents a huge opportunity to increase skills and expertise in Scotland's independent TV industry. We welcome the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee's call on the BBC and Channel 4 to adopt that as a new approach to commissioning by the end of 2016, if not sooner.

It is important to note that, following the Smith commission, we will have a consultative role for the first time in the charter renewal process for the BBC, and it is vital that we work constructively across the parties to get the best deal for viewers in Scotland. The Scottish Labour Party is committed to calling for increased investment for BBC Scotland from within the licence fee settlement and for the retention of the quota system for commissioning from nations and regions.

There is no doubt that the creative industries bring valuable economic benefits to individuals,

communities and the country as a whole. Scotland's cultural and creative activities are as relevant to our international reputation, economic prosperity and trade and investment agenda as direct business support and the promotion of exports. It is vital that all the agencies in the creative industries work collaboratively to achieve greater results and get the best results for Scotland's people. We are open to working with the Scottish Government on providing better support to meet the needs of individuals and companies in the creative sector.

16:46

**Fiona Hyslop:** I thank members for their contributions to the debate. I will address a number of specific areas in my speech, and I will follow up on those that I cannot address. I am committed to returning with updates to the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee, because I think that what we are dealing with is a moveable feast and that there will be developments. It is right for the committee to hold the Government and, indeed, the creative agencies to account.

On areas of key concern, the film studio is still under negotiation in the film industry leadership group's discussions with the private sector developer. There were five bids from the private sector after the private sector tendering request was put out, but only three were eligible. Two bids were fully public sector-funded approaches, but we cannot provide 100 per cent public sector funding support for the studio.

**Claire Baker:** The film studio proposals are quite a complicated picture to understand. There was a proposal in May from a private investor for a studio in the Pentlands area. How does the cabinet secretary see that type of activity fitting with the idea of a Government-supported studio?

**Fiona Hyslop:** The exercise that was carried out was a call for a private sector proposal. I am quite happy to write to the members contributing to the debate to give them an update on where we are and on the process to date. The discussions with the private sector developer are continuing but, for reasons of confidentiality, I cannot give members full details in terms of who, where and when.

However, we are on the case in terms of making sure that we have that studio, because everybody is very clear that we need the infrastructure. We have locations that the industry can use—for example, "Knights of the Roundtable: King Arthur" was filmed here earlier this year. One of the productions taking place here is "Outlander", whose scale of production and economic impact is

comparable with that of “Game of Thrones” in the early years.

Of the £3 million fund that we announced, £1 million is for skills development. We will announce very soon where that skills funding is going. Loans will become more advantageous because of UK tax changes. The £2 million loan fund was created precisely as a response to the producers Joan McAlpine talked about, who came to a meeting with me and John Swinney; the loan fund came out of one of the suggestions at that meeting. There has been some draw-down from the fund, but the draw-down clearly depends on what projects there are. However, we are moving, particularly with the tax changes, into an obvious area for the use of that fund.

The £1.75 million production fund that I announced today will also provide incentives for people to draw down in other areas, whether that be loans, or skills funding, as some of the financial packages can be quite complex from the industry’s perspective.

The point about the sustainability of the screen sector is important. We need to think carefully about what we mean by public service broadcasting. In addition, if we are to have successful public service broadcasting, it is important that we have indigenous companies that are able to benefit from that, too.

On the creative industries more generally, I will pick up Patrick Harvie’s point. At the micro level, it is important to support the entrepreneurial start-ups, and it is pretty clear that the video games industry is fast moving. Indeed, people move from company to company very quickly. That explains the reticence on writing a strategy. The video games sector told me that if it were to spend time on a strategy, it would be out of date by the time it was written because the sector moves so quickly. Therefore, although working with the sector to review what is needed is important, acting promptly will be key.

I will now focus on an area that has not been touched on but which will become increasingly important: the digital single market. It may even be important for the committee to look at that area and its implications because the digital single market strategy will affect the creative industries and the wider sector. In May, I attended the Education, Youth, Culture and Sports Council in Brussels, where I represented the UK during the policy debate on the European Union digital single market strategy and the audiovisual media services directive. It is important that we ensure that the interests of Scotland’s creative industries are represented in the EU proposals on that in the coming months and years. I will work with the UK Government to ensure that its consultation

processes on the digital single market include the creative industries.

I have mentioned the issues around games, the sustainability of television and the importance of having a different package of activity for film. However, it is important that I address the underlying point: how will Creative Scotland and Scottish Enterprise work together? It is clear from Lewis Macdonald’s questions that the issue is not new. It was originally proposed under the previous Administration that Scottish Screen should be merged with the Scottish Arts Council. Working together creates challenges, but why is it that in other sectors, such as the life sciences sector, in which those involved must work with the private sector, the health service and Scottish Enterprise, solutions can be brought to bear?

I place the challenge back on Patrick Harvie: just because the creative industries are diverse does not mean that we should not and cannot have dedicated and focused support similar to what the other key sectors have. That expectation comes through clearly from the committee’s report; it is also this Government’s expectation. The Deputy First Minister and I are clear that we expect the two public agencies, Creative Scotland and Scottish Enterprise, to provide services to the sector, not to each other. We expect that their changes to how they go about things will produce results, and we expect them to be informed by the workshops that have been taking place over the summer in the sector.

I am excited for the sector. There are possibilities. As Drew Smith mentioned, there is cynicism. There is also opportunity, which is what I see for the sector. I hope that the opportunities will, in the near future, outweigh the cynicism.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Dennis Robertson to wind up the debate on behalf of the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee. You have until 5 o’clock, which is exactly six minutes and 20 seconds away.

16:53

**Dennis Robertson (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP):** The clock is ticking. It gives me great pleasure to wind up the debate. I will focus on the cabinet secretary’s comments towards the end of her speech.

There is excitement in the sector, but there is also frustration. Throughout the debate and from the witnesses we heard from in committee there was hope, excitement and ambition for the industry. When I listened to Patrick Harvie, I was thinking, “My goodness, Patrick—your energy in the debate is fantastic.” That energy was also evident in the committee when we took evidence. However, as Joan McAlpine and Johann Lamont

said, there was anger and disappointment at the same time.

In looking at where we are, we knew to some extent what the challenges were. I certainly went into the inquiry not knowing what the outcomes would be. Did I understand the industry? Did I understand the complexities around it? No, I did not. I certainly learnt a lot during the committee's evidence taking.

I thank the clerks and the witnesses for the work that they put into the report. Murdo Fraser started by quoting Gandhi. I think that he was perhaps being a little tongue in cheek—a little flippant—as he can be, even as convener of the committee. As a committee we set ourselves a task not to build up the success of the Government but to analyse in depth where we are and, hopefully, the direction that we are going in.

However, there is no doubt—I do not think that anyone is shying away from the fact—that Creative Scotland and Scottish Enterprise have not been working together as collaboratively as they could have been. I am delighted to hear that workshops have taken place. There is perhaps some regret about the fact that we have not reached a final outcome there. When the cabinet secretary and the Deputy First Minister were at the committee, there was no doubt that they were looking to both those public agencies to work together for the good of and to the betterment of the industry as a whole.

We looked at film, TV and video games. Those are three distinct areas, although as Patrick Harvie rightly said, we could probably take film and television together to some extent.

What is the stumbling point for us? It is the film studio. What is another stumbling point? It is the location of the film studio. Lewis Macdonald talked about the success of Northern Ireland and its film studio, and of studios in Wales, but he forgot to mention state aid. The committee acknowledged clearly the problems of establishing the film studio, given the rules that create the barrier. The word "barrier" has been used a few times during today's debate. Barriers should not be an obstacle. Barriers—if we acknowledge that they exist—should be an opportunity for change. That is probably the direction that we are going in.

I was taken by the fact that Christian Allard—inventive as he always is—started to talk up the north-east, and Dundee in particular, for the location of a film studio. Then we heard George Adam saying, "No, it should be in Paisley", which just shows that comedy is still alive in this industry. In saying that, Edinburgh is home to the fringe. However, Glasgow makes the point. I am certainly not going to pre-empt or pre-judge the location of a film studio, when it eventually arrives. As Johann

Lamont said, if we can have the Commonwealth games in Glasgow, why can we not have the film studio, given that we have the infrastructure? I am sure that there will be many other bids.

I was delighted that the cabinet secretary took the time to visit Aberdeen. Lewis Macdonald mentioned Tern TV, which the cabinet secretary visited in Aberdeen to see for herself the work that goes on in the independent sector. I sincerely hope that she came away impressed by the work that was being produced by Tern TV. I think that that shows that we have the skill, ambition and talent here in Scotland, although there is much to be done.

We have talked about commissioning. We certainly need to see commissioning changing, and commissioning and production coming to Scotland. Given the public consultation that is out there and the opportunities that are before us in the programme for government, I sincerely hope that Scotland can lead the way when it comes to the future of broadcasting and that the people of Scotland can take the opportunity to take the lead.

When we took evidence, I was criticised to some extent for not having participated in video gaming. I always find using certain technologies for gaming to be arduous and difficult, but they are maybe not impossible to use. Perhaps I should commit to trying to get into some of the games that are available to me.

Patrick Harvie said that people from the industries came into the Parliament and demonstrated what they have and where they are going. We have an amazing abundance of talent, ambition and skill, but the industries need that extra lift. They need help from the business gateway and the colleges. They need the infrastructure to bring everything together. They cannot be left out there in limbo.

The Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee looks forward to receiving the update that we asked for from the Scottish Government at the end of the year. I am sure that we will return to this debate.

## Decision Time

17:01

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** There is one question to be put as a result of today's business. The question is, that motion S4M-14048, in the name of Murdo Fraser, on the economic impact of the film, TV and video games industries, be agreed to.

*Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament notes the findings of the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee's 4th Report, 2015 (Session 4), *The economic impact of the film, TV and video games industries* (SP Paper 704).

*Meeting closed at 17:01.*

This is the final edition of the *Official Report* for this meeting. It is part of the Scottish Parliament *Official Report* archive and has been sent for legal deposit.

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